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TWO PROJECTS OF POLISH NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:
BRONISŁAW FERDYNAND TRENTOWSKI AND KAROL LIBELT

Introduction

Until the beginning of the 19th century, Western philosophy evidenced a universal nature. The universalism (unity, cosmopolitanism) of philosophy, residing in the assumption that philosophy cannot serve any particular aims, was particularly pronounced during the Enlightenment. The old paradigm presuming the internal unity of philosophy was enhanced by the commonly disseminated idea of uniformity – that is, eradicating all differences in the name of one universal norm of the enlightened reason. This idea of uniformity laid the foundations for the rational and abstract universalism of the Enlightenment, subsequently questioned by the Romantics who substituted it with a universalism that glorified the diversity of national cultures. In time, both types of universalism – that of the Enlightenment and that of Romanticism – developed into specific concepts of progress. As understood by Enlightenment thinkers, it referred to the progress of reason that eradicated the differences between nations.

According to the Romantics, progress sanctified differences – national individualities. In the history of human kind each nation was a separate entity, while simultaneously each was entrusted with particular historical missions that ensued directly from their specificity. Thus, national elements served to achieve universal human goals: *In the hierarchy of values, what was national was subordinated to what was universal, and the execution of specific, national tasks was considered to be the only way for the implementation of progress.*¹ The universalism of the Enlightenment, free from any references to particular interests, was substituted with pluralist universalism.

Theoretical foundations for its development were laid by J. G. Herder, who – in opposition to the historiosophy proposed during the Enlightenment – claimed that each nation has its own intrinsic characteristics which are revealed in the course of its development. He rejected the uniformity of the Enlightenment: striving for humanity is not about the unification of national

¹ A. Walicki, *Uniwersalizm i narodowość w polskiej myśli filozoficznej i koncepcjach mesjanistycznych epoki Romantyzmu (po roku 1831)* [Universalism and Nationality in Polish Philosophical Thought and Messianic Concepts of the Romantic Period (after 1831)] in: J. Kłoczowski (ed.), *Uniwersalizm i swoistość kultury polskiej* [Universalism and Specificity of Polish Culture], vol. 2, Lublin 1990, p. 37.

cultures, but requires the development of values specific to particular nations. This assumption effected Herder's postulate for creating both a national literature and a national philosophy. Since the 19th century, the historians of philosophy, while classifying various doctrines, concepts and schools of philosophy, have repeatedly applied the criterion of national origin (hence French, English, Italian philosophy, etc.). The fact that climate, customs, language, and religion influence philosophical views was unquestionable. What was controversial, however, was the view that philosophical schools and systems are national not only due to external factors, but they are also

*national in the sense of their internal intrinsic natures. Thus one needs to – according to the proponents of this belief – not only present the national character of philosophy in historical studies that demonstrate the cultural origin of philosophical thought; one also needs to make philosophy itself the expression of the national spirit; one needs to create national philosophy deliberately and methodically.*¹

This manner of understanding the notion of the national character of philosophy appeared during the first half of the 19th century, and may be seen also in the writings of Polish Romantic thinkers.

The individual character and specificity of Polish Romantic philosophy are marked by: 1) a tendency toward syncretism involving an attempt to combine various, contradictory philosophical approaches, 2) a tendency towards maximalism that privileged a metaphysical model of philosophy, 3) the influence of Polish Messianism (the Polish self-image as a *Christ among nations*) that developed simultaneously, 4) a belief that philosophy should be connected with life, that it should lead to action, 5) perceiving philosophy as a substantial element of national self-knowledge (this belief provides the grounds for the idea of the necessity for formulating a *national philosophy*), 6) the influence of German philosophy (mainly that of Schelling and Hegel) but, also, in the context of the issues discussed here, that of Fichte and J. G. Herder, 7) ideological confusion due to philosophical ideas being mixed with religious ones, and also due to the inclusion of ideological assertions of a religious provenience, though contradictory to Orthodox views, into philosophical theories (Messianism).

Some of the features enumerated here (philosophical maximalism, stressing the importance of the metaphysics of the absolute, a belief that philosophy is an essential element of national self-knowledge, the practical aspect) appeared in the writings of those philosophers active in the first two decades of the 19th century. In their more developed forms, these characteristics of Polish Romantic philosophy can be discovered, although to varying degrees, in the works of those philosophers whose most significant achievements were published after 1830, that is, subsequent to the fall of the

¹ S. Pieróg, *Projekt filozofii narodowej (dwugłos: Trentowski – Massonius)* [A Project of National Philosophy (A Dialogue: Trentowski – Massonius)] in: *Polskie ethos i logos [Polish Ethos and Logos]*, (ed.) J. Skoczyński, Kraków 2008, p. 131.

November Uprising. This pertains to the writings of Count August Cieszkowski, Bronisław Ferdynand Trentowski, Karol Libelt, Henryk Kamieński and Edward Dembowski. Depending on the adopted criterion, these authors' achievements are collectively referred to as *the philosophy of the 1840s* (time), *the philosophy of action* (negation of the one-sided contemplative nature of German philosophy, mainly that of Hegel; belief that philosophy must be connected with life, must lead to action), or *national philosophy* (due to the commonly held belief that such philosophy is possible and needs to be created). The idea of the national character of philosophy is not an original product of Polish Romantic thinkers. This notion is typical of the Romantic worldview in general, and was adopted by Polish thinkers from German philosophers.

Access to the writings produced by Herder, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel and recognition of the essence of Romantic pluralistic universalism inspired Polish philosophers of that period to change the hitherto common philosophical paradigm. The paradigm prevailing thus far – scientific, impersonal – was substituted with the belief that philosophy is also an expression of a nation's spirit, including its worldview. The process of incorporating a worldview into philosophy resulted in, among other things, various programs of *national philosophy*. Although the idea of perceiving philosophy as a worldview was derived from German philosophy, it had a particularly fertile ground to thrive upon in Poland, in a sense seeming already ripe for its adoption. Still, though the initial idea was of a German origin, its development and implementation by Polish thinkers were innovative. First, because the Polish *national principle* incorporated contents specific to the worldview and character of Polish people; second, the development of the originally German idea of incorporating a worldview into philosophy was carried out through refuting German philosophy and its contemplative approach in particular.

Polish Romantic philosophers commonly shared the view that it was necessary to create a national philosophy. This uniform agreement as to the need, possibility and sensibility of formulating a philosophy that would express the national worldview did not mean, however, that all authors of the programs of *national philosophy* perceived this national character of philosophy in quite the same way. The most eminent representatives of Polish *national philosophy* of the 1840s differed not only in their interpretations of the *national principle* (*the spirit of the nation*), but also as regards the necessity of exposing the national character of philosophy. Although they all believed that philosophy is national, not all of them judged it proper to particularly emphasize this feature. A. Cieszkowski claimed that philosophy is national because nationality shapes one's thoughts. However, this feature of philosophy – nationality – does not need to be particularly accentuated. Placing too much emphasis on it can obscure its universal nature, whereas genuine philosophy must remain universal¹. Also E. Dembowski believed that philosophy was national as long as it reflected the spirit of a nation. He used

¹ A. Cieszkowski, *Rzecz o filozofii jońskiej* [*On the Ionian School of Philosophy*] in: A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii* [*Prolegomena to Historiosophy*], Warszawa 1972, p. 256.

this term with reference to his own *philosophy of creation*. He claimed it to be national because it was founded on creation, and a creation, that is, the union of thought and action, is the intrinsic feature of the Polish spirit. Emphasizing irrational elements of culture was, according to him, unacceptable, because philosophy must remain inherently rational. He treated his own *philosophy of creation* as national; yet, he did not regard this feature of it as the antithesis of rational philosophy. Moreover, he argued that national philosophy cannot be based solely on national culture. It should reach out to the achievements of other nations, including philosophy¹. Thus, according to Dembowski, philosophy can be national only if it is also rational and universal. Also H. Kamieński applied the term *national* to his conception of *philosophy of action*. Like A. Cieszkowski, he asserted that the national character cannot overshadow the universality of philosophy and, even more so, substitute it. Hence the influence of the national spirit – specific features of a given nation – does not need to be particularly accentuated. Genuine philosophy must be universal.

II Trentowski

The national character of his own *universal philosophy* was much more strongly expressed by Bronisław Ferdynand Trentowski. The idea of formulating a *universal philosophy*, i.e. a philosophy that would fuse partial truths of the hitherto philosophies, was conceived as a result of Trentowski's deliberation over the characteristics of European philosophy during the previous one hundred years. He presented the history of the development of European philosophical thought as an area comprised of the conflicting worlds: materialism and spiritualism, empiricism and speculation, intellectualism and rationalism, rationalism and mysticism, naturalism and supernaturalism. He regarded the antinomies produced in the history of philosophical thought as one-sided and termed them as philosophical *half-truths* and *half-falsehoods*. The *sin* of one-sidedness, according to Trentowski, is applicable to the philosophies of Leibniz, Christian Wolff and Fichte (the *sin* is understood here as excessive speculation or insufficient consideration given to empiricism), as well as Locke's system as it relied on the empirical method solely. Only Schelling, who unified realism and idealism most profoundly, avoided this one-sidedness in his opinion. Following Schelling's synthesis, the split into Hegel's idealism and Ocken's realism was interpreted by Trentowski as a regress, a return to one-sidedness. (In fact, he finally considered Schelling's synthesis only as a formal construct, and not a genuine one².)

In Trentowski's opinion, truth (philosophical truth) resides in the synthesis of approaches to philosophical problems rather than in their one-sided conceptualizations. Trentowski desired a synthesis of all partial truths of the hitherto philosophical systems and wanted to unify all the antithetical approaches into one system. Thus *universal philosophy* was to overcome the

¹ E. Dembowski, *Pisma*, pp. 366–367.

² B. Trentowski, *List do Stanisława Szlubowskiego z 8 kwietnia 1836 roku* [Letter to Stanisław Szlubowski of April 8, 1836] in: *Listy Bronisława Trentowskiego (1836–1869)* [Bronisław Trentowski's Letters (1836–1869)], (ed.) S. Pigoń, Kraków 1937, p. 3.

limitations and avoid the one-sidedness that had characterized philosophy thus far. Synthetism comprised in the postulate to combine contradictory philosophical approaches was one of the characteristic features of Polish philosophy during the first half of the 19th century. All the representatives of Polish national philosophy were the proponents of synthetism. With his project of *universal philosophy*, Trentowski initiated this tendency among Polish thinkers. The synthesis that he proposed was not meant to be a simple synthesis of the ideal with the real; it was not supposed to be Hegelian synthesis, i.e. one that eradicated differences. It was to be a higher synthesis as a result of which the third world is reached; one that cannot be reduced to its constituents, although it unifies the real with the ideal.

This higher synthesis was termed by Trentowski as *różnojednia* [difference-in-identity]. In difference-in-identity, antinomies are united in the synthesis that does not eliminate differences, but preserves them. Such a universal synthesis, producing the *difference-in-identity* that incorporated almost all oppositions existing in gnoseology, ontology, logics, anthropology, ethics and pedagogy, constituted the foundation of Trentowski's system of *universal philosophy*. He relied on his principle of *difference-in-identity* in all areas of his work. This principle originated from a genetic method (dialectics). It is exceptional because it is synthetic and analytic simultaneously.

Synthesis and analysis regarded separately are limited and do not guarantee complete cognition. Analysis in itself is empirical, but superficial; synthesis regarded separately is solely theoretical, and thus one-sided. The method employed by *universal philosophy*, that is philosophy that aims at eliminating one-sidedness, can be only a genetic method. Analysis and synthesis are united by means of apperception¹. The genetic method – dialectic – is the method of *universal philosophy* because it is both empirical and theoretical simultaneously, thus it is all-encompassing. Apperception unites reality (reality understood as a philosophical expression of substance and objectivity) with ideality which is the expression of causality and subjectivity, thus leading to the third world (real, divine, and transcendental). In Trentowski's view, apperception is not a compromise between the real and the ideal; it is not something in between – between experience and reason; it is a holistic cognition that embraces simultaneously and equally both experience and reason. Apperception encompasses the whole truth, and not only its separate aspects.

Trentowski argued that any man realized that any other man does not ask whether to cognize empirically or metaphysically; he just cognizes. Apperception means that while thinking one sees, hears, etc., thus, one *experiences*

¹ In his first work *Grundlage der universellen Philosophie* Trentowski introduces the term *Wahrnehmung* to refer to the third cognitive faculty (along with *Erfahrung* and *Vernunft*). In the 1978 Polish translation of this work, *apercepcja* (apperception) was chosen as the best equivalent for *Wahrnehmung* because it connoted Kantian transcendental unity of apperception that Trentowski himself referred to. The true model for Trentowski's apperception was, actually, Schelling's *intuition* (Germ. *Intellektuelle Anschauung*, Eng. *Intellectual intuition*). In Trentowski's interpretation, however, *intellectual intuition* refers only to *the form of truth* (it is only formal), but does not allow for the cognition of its essence. Only apperception, understood as total cognition (*a totali*) can lead to the essence of truth. In later works, written in Polish, he uses solely his neologism *myst*.

while thinking¹. In his works written in Polish, beginning with *Chowanna, czyli system pedagogiki narodowej* [*Chowanna, or the System of National Pedagogy*]², Trentowski introduces a new term *myst* instead of apperception in order to emphasize the national character of his philosophy. Other nations have practical reason or pure reason, and Poles have *myst*, the source and divine element of both *zmysł* [practical reason/common sense] and *umysł* [pure reason/mind]³. The genetic method (dialectic) leads to *philosophical difference-in-identity* that unifies the relative *różnia* [difference] (the effect of the activity of the practical reason) with absolute *jednia* [identity] of the pure reason that unites what the practical reason has divided. The principle of *difference-in-identity* is the foundation of the system of *universal philosophy*. As previously mentioned, Trentowski based on it his theory of cognition, anthropology, ontology, logics and pedagogy. The major national feature of Trentowski's philosophy was *myst* – the third cognitive faculty discovered by him, that holistically unifies the real with the ideal, matter with spirit. Trentowski, with his great ambition to distinguish himself in the field of philosophy, believed that the kind of philosophy that he had formulated was unknown to other nations. The world discovered by means of *myst* (the third, divine, transcendental world) is exclusively Polish. Having *myst*, the universal synthetic element, ensures Poles advantage over other nations, because it allows them insight into this third world known neither by the French nor Germans.

A characteristic feature of Polish philosophy, the one originating from the Polish spirit, is its synthetic drive. A specific attribute of this synthetism, accessible only to Poles, is the possibility of perceiving reality as *difference-in-identity*. If, as a nation, the French are characterized by perceiving *różnia* [difference] in the sensual world (Trentowski believed the French to have been the masters in the development of empirical philosophy) and Germans by perceiving the spiritual *jednia* [identity] (Germanic nations *worshipped* speculation), then Poles are best equipped to perceive the world as *difference-in-identity*. It is this notion that Trentowski assigned to be the cardinal principle of cognition in national philosophy. Polish philosophy differs from German or French philosophies in that it has the ability to solve philosophical problems synthetically. The tool for such synthesis, that is Polish *myst*, derives from the active, realistic and practical character of the Polish spirit. Polish philosophy should manifest itself in the world through action rather than through ideas. Its objective is to demonstrate a relationship with life rather than express the world in the form of abstract schemata. A practical drive was one of the

¹ B. F. Trentowski, *Podstawy filozofii uniwersalnej. Wstęp do nauki o naturze* [*Foundations of Universal Philosophy. Introduction to the Study of Nature*], transl. M. Zułkoś-Rozmaryn, Warszawa 1978, p. 500.

² Trentowski actively participated as a soldier in an armed rebellion of partitioned Poland against the Russian Empire (The November Uprising, 1830–31). After the uprising's suppression he emigrated from the country. He stayed shortly in Königsberg and Heidelberg, eventually settling at Freiburg in Baden where he continued his philosophical studies. In 1837 he published his PhD thesis in German, entitled *Grundlage der universellen Philosophie*, in 1838 his habilitation thesis *De vita hominis aeterna*, and in 1840 *Vorstudien zur Wissenschaft der Natur*. Since 1842 Trentowski began to write in Polish.

³ B. F. Trentowski, *Myślina, czyli całokształt logiki narodowej*, vol. 1, p. XXVII.

characteristic features of Trentowski's philosophy. The belief that Polish philosophy cannot be solely theoretical, that it must lead to action is not, however, specific only to Trentowski's philosophy.

As it has already been said, this is a tenet characteristic to all representatives of Polish national philosophy of the 1840s¹. Focusing on action (creation, labour) resulted from the polemics with German philosophy, Hegel's philosophy in particular, that epitomized contemplation – the dominance of thought over action. Based on the practical (life-connected) character of the Polish spirit, Trentowski drew a conclusion that Polish philosophy should aim at awakening the active self. In other words, it should strive for the creation of a *genuine man* who can see his true relationship with the essence of the world. The cognition of the active self generates Polish philosophy. Following the domination by Romanesque and Germanic nations, there came that time for the triumph of Slavic nations led by Poles (this was meant, of course, as leadership in terms of philosophy). National philosophy was understood to be the foundation of national education. Its development and dissemination were not possible, however, without a thorough knowledge of the philosophy of other nations, French and German in particular. If this requirement is not met, the national attribute – *mysł* – may evolve into blind fanaticism. According to Trentowski, not only would his philosophy be impossible, but also any other kind of philosophy, without referring to the achievements of other nations. This also pertains to a national pedagogy (the principles of national pedagogy based on the assumptions of universal philosophy were presented by Trentowski in his work entitled *Chowanna, or the System of National Pedagogy*).

National pedagogy should aim at bringing up a *real man*, that is a man who is both able to act and who is noble (rejects utility and one's own benefit). This goal is, however, not achievable without the knowledge of other cultures (including positive features of other nations' characters). The ability to act, as a national feature of Poles, could be executed only when it was united with reasonableness and perseverance, while impetuosity, impulsiveness, mindless heroism and recklessness should be eliminated from the stock of national vices. Unreasonableness is one of the worst national vices². Ability to act, as a national attribute of Poles, predestines them to be the leaders in the further development of culture (philosophy). This will be, however, possible only when Poles learn how to act reasonably, and when they incorporate the best features of modern nations into their own performance. Thus national and universal values must not be regarded as antinomies. Only their synthesis protects us from a self-complacency that can easily transform the virtues of the national character into national vices.

A critical attitude towards national vices as well as to national history is one of the most significant goals of pedagogy based on national philosophy. Previous actions (deeds) of Poles were dominated by fancy; they lacked will-

¹ The issue of action was developed in more detail in the philosophical system of August Cieszkowski.

² B. F. Trentowski, *Chowanna, czyli system pedagogiki narodowej*, vol. 1, p. 341.

power and reasonableness. Poles, according to Trentowski, do not need fancy (they have an excess of it), but logical thinking. In the *Preface* to his work *Myślini, the Overview of National Logic* he argued that in order to destroy ghosts tormenting it (excess of fancy and Middle Ages-like religiousness), the Polish nation needs logic. In his presentation of national logic, Trentowski adapts Latin and German philosophical terminology to the norms of the Polish language, and – based on his principle of *philosophical difference-in-identity* – formulates a complex and excessively formalized system, in which he combines Hegel's logic (ontology) with Aristotle's logic.

Due to a large number of neologisms and an excessive application of the dialectic method (employing a ternary division, he differentiates over one hundred logic categories), *Myślini* is actually incomprehensible for modern readers. In fact, it was already regarded as controversial by Trentowski's contemporaries. If nobody questioned the idea of *national philosophy*, his *national logic* was perceived as an absurd oddity. The issue of the national character of philosophy was also reflected upon by Trentowski in the context of religion. In his view, *national philosophy* equated Polish, but not Catholic philosophy. *National philosophy* was not to be an apology for Catholicism. The objective of *national philosophy* was to awaken the spirit of freedom and independent thought, whereas the Catholicism of that time – Middle Ages-like according to Trentowski – as well as Messianism, precluded people from such an awakening.

Trentowski's program of national philosophy and pedagogy was criticized by his contemporaries, especially by Catholic thinkers F. Kozłowski, E. Ziemięcka, and I. Hołowiński, who believed that Polish and national philosophy could be only Christian (Catholic) philosophy or one consistent with this doctrine. In their view, Trentowski's philosophy that equated God with nature – in his first writings, Trentowski professed pantheism, later he declared theism, although he never completely resigned from the presence of God in the universe – is not Polish philosophy. Actually, it is pernicious to Polish philosophy. This opinion, unfavourable for Trentowski and other national philosophers, changed in the 1870s. It was then that E. Ziemięcka chose the degree of deviation from Hegel's philosophy as a criterion for the evaluation of *national philosophy*, rather than its consistency with Catholic (Christian) thought. Additionally, she noticed in Trentowski's *national philosophy* (as well as in that of its other representatives) ideas consistent with Catholicism (defence of a personal God and individual immortality)¹.

Later opinions concerning the value of Trentowski's *national philosophy* were equivocal. Polish Positivists were definitely critical about the idea of *national philosophy*, including B. Trentowski's project. M. Massonius believed that the formulation of national philosophies, that is, the expression of national worldviews, precludes any search for truth, because there is only

¹ Based on: C. Głombik, *Tradycja i interpretacje. Antoni Malicki a reakcja katolicka wobec polskiej "filozofii narodowej"* [Tradition and Interpretations. Antoni Malicki and Catholic Reaction towards Polish "National Philosophy"], Warszawa 1973.

one truth¹. Later, critical assessments were also frequently voiced. S. Harassek claimed that at the time when Poland was deprived of its sovereignty, the formulation of programs of *national philosophy* was almost a must, yet this idea cannot be defended. He faulted Trentowski with not proving that *myst* is an exclusive Polish cognitive faculty, unknown to other nations; and that he desired to use philosophy, that should be subordinated to the idea of truth, as a tool for political struggle. According to Harassek, Trentowski's program of *national philosophy* is a *substantially developed, fantastic edifice of collective and individual self-illusion*². The introduction of extreme nationalistic premises was decisive in assessing Trentowski's national philosophy as *a national tragedy of philosophy*³. Yet Trentowski's theory was defended by his biographer and expert concerning his writings, W. Horodyski. He reckoned that Trentowski first and foremost meant the development of philosophy *per se*. He did not link his *national philosophy* with political issues or Messianism. Thus he never departed from

*the ground of philosophy itself and paved the way for another type of national philosophy in a double sense of this word: first, to create a system of Polish philosophy and to have philosophical writings created in the Polish language [...] second, that Poland produces such a system of truth that it could become fundamental to European thought.*⁴

It is in this vein that Trentowski's project of *national philosophy* is defended presently by S. Pieróg. He primarily stresses that, contrary to the suggestions of his critics, Trentowski desired neither the creation nor an expression of a Polish national worldview. This Polish philosopher strove most of all for truth (objective and even absolute). He believed that cognitive effort is not *solely his personal effort aiming at the achievement of his personal desires and expectations, but it is rather an effort of a much greater subject than his subjective "I" – that is, of the divine subject, absolute spirit*⁵. A long, historical process of seeking for the truth of the absolute spirit is unachievable, according to Trentowski, without the participation of national spirits. The development of the absolute spirit is of a dialectic nature. It originates in a fight between contradictory philosophical conceptions. In the history of philosophy understood dialectically, the main role is

played not only by particular thinkers, but also, and actually primarily, by entire nations, national cultures (spirits) and traditions of philosophical thought shaped within them. These national traditions

¹ S. Pieróg, *Projekt filozofii narodowej* [Project of National Philosophy], p. 133.

² S. Harassek, *Filozofia a ethnos*, p. 185.

³ S. Harassek, *Pomysł i założenia epistemologiczne filozofii narodowej Trentowskiego* [Conception and Epistemological Premises of Trentowski's National Philosophy] in: *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny* 1, 1935.

⁴ W. Horodyski, *Bronisław Trentowski (1809–1869)*, p. 11.

⁵ S. Pieróg, *Projekt filozofii narodowej*, p. 142.

*co-create in fact (and this is a long, historical process) one philosophy – general philosophy.*¹

S. Pieróg adds that Trentowski presumed this discovery to be a substantial achievement of contemporary philosophy. He was convinced that philosophers had finally created an ontology that provided conceptual bases for the idea of a dialectic development of the history of philosophy. Hence he deemed his own concept of universal philosophy as an expression of Polish *national philosophy*, but he also treated it as a way of seeking for the universal, that is for truth².

The status of Trentowski's project of *national philosophy* is explained yet again from a different perspective by A. Walicki. In his view, Trentowski's writings, though originating from a German philosophical culture, nevertheless bear *the mark of Polishness*. This does not refer to the consistency of his philosophy with the spirit of the Polish nation, but to the historical frame of reference. This frame of reference, understood both negatively and positively, was provided by Polish Catholicism:

*The founder of national philosophy desired to influence his nation's worldview through the rationalization of his nation's image of God and the world; a rationalization – let us stress – that was gradual and took into account the power of religious faith [...]. His philosophy was determined on the one hand by the Catholic doctrine it attempted to philosophize, and on the other, by the animosity towards clericalism and his passionate desire to overcome the native backwardness, thus releasing Poland from the proverbial darkness of the Middle Ages.*³

Trentowski the philosopher desired Polish philosophy to significantly influence and lead the development of European thought, as French philosophy had in the past and German during his times. Thus he rejected Hegel's famous thesis concerning the end of philosophy. Germans and the French had already fulfilled their missions, and now it was the time for the Slav nations, including Poles, to develop philosophical ideas.

This postulate does not contain any nationalistic overtones. Rather, it concerns a philosophy that, according to Trentowski, had not ceased to exist along with German idealism. He believed, consistent with the spirit of his epoch, that any product of the human spirit, including philosophy, reflected features of the national character. The national objective was not, however, emphasized in his philosophy. Trentowski aimed at introducing his own *national philosophy* into the realm of general philosophy, hoping that *the national principle* (synthetism and tendency for action) would contribute to

¹ S. Pieróg, *Projekt filozofii narodowej*, p. 142.

² S. Pieróg, *Projekt filozofii narodowej*, p. 142.

³ A. Walicki, *Bronisław Trentowski in: Polska myśl filozoficzna i społeczna [Polish Philosophical and Social Thought]*, vol. 1: 1831–1863, (ed.) A. Walicki, Warszawa 1973, p. 365.

the latter's development. Thus, in this sense, he did not juxtapose the national character of philosophy with universalism. Burdening Poles with the mission of reviving European culture (philosophy) was treated by Trentowski as a significant, but remote aim. Were Poles to become distinguished in the field of philosophy, an enormous effort focused on elevating the general level of the culture was necessary first. *National philosophy* and, most of all, *national pedagogy* were to educate the nation in a spirit consistent with the idea of universalism. Neglecting questions and problems of general philosophy and the achievements of other nations would condemn Poles to cultural isolation. *National philosophy* was not supposed to serve particular national interests because this would have led to isolation. On the other hand, Trentowski did not want to be a mere imitator of foreign models. He was convinced that Polish philosophy (including mainly his *national philosophy*) could enrich general philosophy by adding new elements. There is no contradiction between the national and the particular and seeking for truth. Trentowski deemed truths discovered by him to be national. But the national character of these truths cannot be treated as their shortcomings because their cognitive value is preserved. Being national truths, they do not cease to be philosophical truths of a universal nature. Trentowski criticised the tradition of German idealism because he believed that this philosophy had exhausted its possibilities for further development. While formulating his system of *universal philosophy* he considered primarily the idea of truth, rather than political aims.

III Libelt

Another comprehensive program of *national philosophy* was developed by Karol Libelt. His philosophical writings feature all characteristic hallmarks of Polish *national philosophy* of the 1840s: synthetism, maximalism, anti-contemplative approach, and a conviction that it was necessary to formulate a *national philosophy*. When devising his own philosophical program, Libelt adopted many of the categories and concepts created by Trentowski. He regarded *Myślini, the Overview of National Logic* as the most significant achievement of Polish philosophy thus far. Libelt – Hegel's disciple – was impressed by the breadth with which Trentowski materialized his ambitions to create philosophical systems. He based one of his most important works *System umnictwa, czyli filozofii umysłowej* [*Umnictwo, or the System of the Philosophy of Mind*] on Trentowski's *Myślini ...*. However, he was not Trentowski's disciple par excellence and disagreed with him as regards many significant issues. One of the differences between them involved the question of *national philosophy*. This is the area where the two philosophers entered into polemics, fragments of which will be discussed in the final section of this paper.

Libelt was convinced that each nation had a specific mission to fulfil. Once this mission is accomplished, that nation gives way to other nations. Now was the time for the Slavs to fulfil their missions, under the leadership of the Polish nation. The absence of a sovereign state was not viewed as an obstacle in undertaking this mission because political annihilation was not tantamount to *historical death*. The accomplishment of this mission (its final

aim was the rebirth of Poland), requires two constituents: philosophy – one which would overcome the limitations and one-sidedness of German idealism, on the one hand, and truths professed by the Polish common people (folk), on the other. In Libelt's view, the basic limitation of German idealism resides in the *autocracy (monocracy)* of pure reason. Reason as understood by German idealists annihilated spirit: [b]ecause reason itself permeates the entire essence of spirit, there is nothing spiritual, except for reason¹. Reason also destroyed materiality, because it became the reality of the material world, whereas materiality turned into nothingness.

Libelt defied the totalitarian aspirations of pure reason that would annihilate everything originating from irrational sources – feelings, instinct, imagination, prophecies, faith and fancy of the common people. Additionally reason destroyed religion, which is apparently *blind* if not sanctioned by it. *Autocracy of reason is a sheer Jewish deism – this is the God of Israel that excludes all other Gods [...]*² According to Libelt, in the framework of German philosophy, reason is merely *the Enlightener* (one who enlightens reality, thus differentiating truth from falsehood). It contains neither the element of the *Creator*, nor the *Saviour*. Reason is not *the maker, the organic*, thus it does not require reality. Pure reason as perceived by German idealists creates its own *reality* (reality of concepts), hence transforming both God and man into abstractions. Reason *seeks itself everywhere, but where it does not discover itself, it discovers no truth, but falsehood [...]* *superstition*³. Reason is an important source of cognition, it is *the power of knowledge*, but it lacks a creative force. Reason must be complemented by imagination which, as the second element of spirit, contains what reason lacks – a power that is creative, constructive, and formative. A separate development of these two elements of spirit led to German idealism on the one hand, and to mysticism on the other. Additionally, there is also religion, based on feelings, which is rather aligned with mysticism and which willingly *turns its weapon against the truths of reason*⁴. Each of these elements of spirit is essential (it is a necessity, in fact), but when standing alone as philosophy, mysticism or religion, each leads to one-sidedness.

Libelt, like Trentowski, desired to overcome this one-sidedness (truth is not contained only in philosophy itself, or in mysticism itself, or in religion itself, each treated separately): *reason and sense would achieve nothing without the imagination, and imagination would achieve nothing without reason and sense*⁵. Philosophy that renounces imagination (mysticism) leads to criticism; philosophy dominated by sense (feelings) becomes subordinated to religion; philosophy governed by imagination *turns into cabbala, symbo-*

¹ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej* [*Autocracy of Reason and Manifestations of Slavic Philosophy*], p. 154.

² K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 154.

³ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 155.

⁴ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 363.

⁵ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 363.

*lism, mysticism*¹. If philosophy is to embody the truth, it must combine these three faculties of the spirit. This also refers to religion. It can renounce neither reason, nor imagination. Also mysticism, if based exclusively on imagination, becomes corrupted and leads to *false Messianism*. Depending on the degree to which mysticism is fused either with reason or sense, its various types developed. Mysticism is important to philosophy because intuition, which allows a direct insight into the spiritual world, derives from it. Hence Libelt defended mysticism as a source of intuition. Mysticism is neither the *objective* nor an *incident* of philosophy, but a transition to *Slavic philosophy*. German philosophy turned reasoning into its objective, thus falling into the trap of one-sidedness; it became *shapeless* and *dead in itself*². German idealism exhausted its possibilities for further development. This does not, however, signify the end of philosophy per se. German philosophy (including Hegel's philosophy that crowned the development of idealism) was only one stage in the immemorial process of approximating the truth. Various nations participate in this search for truth. The German nation had already accomplished its historical mission and should give way to other nations.

Libelt criticized German idealism (the speculative reason of the German idealism) for its abstractionism and contemplative tendency as well as for being completely detached from life. Being a sheer abstraction, German philosophy (mainly Hegelian) was unable to initiate any changes in the world and, consequently, had to be overcome. Moreover, Libelt did not accept the way German idealism interpreted the personality of God and individual immortality, as well as pantheism (like Trentowski, however, he never completely freed himself from it). The future *Slavic philosophy*, based on the national, Polish element, was to serve as the antithesis to German idealism. The history of philosophy indicates that philosophies have always been national. The national character of, for instance, Greek philosophy (and analogously of Chinese, Indian, and German philosophies) is related to specific features which could have developed only within the Greek nation. Consequently, there is no contradiction between philosophy (rationality) and nationality. Philosophy must be grounded in reason.

This conviction stems directly from *the category of identity* [unity], which is a synthesis of the general and the particular. Philosophy per se is tantamount to abstract thought (dead reason), but philosophy perceived as a living thought *is the identity* [unity] *of the thought of God (the general) and of the nation (the particular)*. God (God's wisdom) is revealed through mankind (nations). This process is carried out through the eternal spirit that is revealed within the humankind gradually. The spirit requires humankind (nations), but because it is revealed gradually humankind cannot be uniform and limited to one nation only. The humankind that is required by the spirit must be multinational and diverse in terms of character: *a dialectic process of spirituality requires [...] a dialectic material – hence the necessity of nationality in*

¹ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 364.

² K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 164.

*humankind*¹. Differences between nations serve as tools for the spirit that develops through different nations. *The germs of the future development of spirit* are thus contained in the nations. Based on these *germs*, specific features of each nation are shaped. Some nations are already dead; they are exhausted; others are just being awakened for action. The eternal spirit is the spirit of history, law, religion, and also of philosophy. As the *spirit of philosophy*, it is a *spirit that cognizes itself through knowledge*². Just as social progress is possible through various new nations, in philosophy every now and then there appears a nation that initiates changes and transforms it by means of the power of the *spiritual germ* contained in this nation for centuries. Consequently, not only can philosophy be national, but *there is no other* [philosophy], *but national*³.

How does one know which features (abilities) are national and which cannot be regarded as such? In Libelt's view, the national character is contained where *the spirit develops itself in itself*, thus in philosophy, religion, law, fine arts, literature and social institutions. National philosophy is beneficial not only for one particular nation. Greek philosophy generated Christian thought, German philosophy generated Polish philosophy. Thus future *Slavic philosophy* should be of benefit to other nations. *Slavic philosophy* was to be based on the Slavic element, Polish in particular, because the Polish nation most evidently manifested *the awakening spirit*⁴. The national element (the national principle) should be searched for, according to Libelt, among the common people, where it remained in its intact, original form, rather than among scholars and intellectualists (in people blessed with intelligence, the national character has a tendency for being erased). Slavic people *did not waste their spirit*, thus giving them an advantage over other nations. They did not subordinate their spirit to the absolute power of reason. Hence they preserved their original traditions and pure faith. Polish philosophers of that period were not the only ones who followed this premise. They were supported by German thinkers, J. G. Herder being the first one who explicitly expressed this support. In the so-called *Slavic chapter* of his *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* he entrusted Slavs with the mission of propagating humanity in the future. Herder's pro-Slavic attitude was known in Poland (and also in other Slavic states) and although the political situation in Poland at that time contradicted his historical ideas, Polish founders of *national philosophy* referred to his writings. Moreover, K. Libelt invoked the ideas of a German historian Hanusch, who was convinced that Slavs, unlike other nations, preserved *the national element* in its purest form. Additionally Libelt quoted Adam Mickiewicz who, in his *Paris Lectures*, claimed that the Polish national character (Slavic national character)

¹ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 227.

² K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 238.

³ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 229.

⁴ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 231.

was based on the belief maintaining the constant influence of the spiritual world upon the material world.

The national principle, in Libelt's view, should be searched for in the spirituality and faith of the Polish common people, because this is where it is preserved in its purest form, untainted by external influences. The Polish folk retained faith in the direct influence of the spiritual world upon the material world. Nothing can waiver this faith. It is most evident in the sphere of religion, but also in the manifestations of spiritual life called *the faith of the commoners*. Common people do not understand but, much more profoundly, sense and cognize life, its spiritual mysteries in particular. Living close to nature and observing its rules, common people retained *the ability to internally communicate* with it. A specific feature that characterizes common people's faith is the identity (unity) of the material and spiritual worlds. This identity comprises the first of the ten principles of the future *Slavic philosophy*. The other commandments of *the Decalogue of Slavic philosophy* are as follows¹:

- *Slavic philosophy* must renounce the *autocracy* of reason. It should attain truth through a direct, internal contact with the eternal spirit;
- *Slavic philosophy* should assign spiritual truths with conceivable forms, in other words, it must *perceive spirit as a formed individuality, as a person*;
- action and reality must be the essence of the spirit;
- *Slavic philosophy* should be free of any dualisms. This is the only way to attain the Platonic *triad* of Good, True, Beautiful;
- whatever is material does not originate from man, but from God. Man acquires the rights to this *divine vassalage* by means of his work and dignified life;
- the brotherhood of the men who form a nation means *the identity with the divine thought that is represented by a nation as a separate nationality*;
- a nation is *incarnated divine thought*, thus being the highest authority. The nation transfers this authority by means of its will to individuals. The realization of divine thought is regarded as the national mission. This divine thought resides in each member of the nation. Subordination to it is then natural, just as the indignation that will occur when the authority does not act according to divine thought;
- Slavic religion is to be a Catholic religion because it limits the *autocracy* of reason. Limiting the *autocracy* of reason does not signify a complete detachment from it. A future Slavic religion is to be *a religion of progress*, thus a religion consistent with philosophy;
- the future *Slavic philosophy* cannot be scholastic; it must *go beyond school*; it must be folk philosophy, that is, a philosophy that realizes a common people's faith through action.

Poles, according to Libelt, do not possess the contemplative genius that characterizes Germans. They have never manifested a propensity for formulating abstract constructions. What always differentiated Poles as a nation was

¹ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 236.

the connection with the spiritual world (a close relationship with the spiritual world). It was so strong that it intertwined with the national spirit. Thus the future *Slavic philosophy* would emerge from a belief in the existence of a direct connection between the material and spiritual worlds. It differs from German philosophy in that it does not negate matter, but acknowledges it as a necessary manifestation of the spirit; in that it does not perceive God as a reason that negates individuality and materiality, but as a spirit, as an active and creative individuality¹. Romantic poetry, rich in prophecies and mysticism, was another source for the future *Slavic philosophy*. Philosophy should translate the language of poetry into the language of thought and appreciate mysticism as a new manifestation of the national life.

The postulates set forth in the *Decalogue of Slavic philosophy* were to be realized through *Umnictwo*, or *the system of the philosophy of mind* created by Libelt. *Umnictwo (philosophy of mind)* is a synthesis of pure reason and the philosophy of imagination (the mysticism and poetry of Slavic peoples). Reason and mysticism must be balanced. Mysticism is essential to eliminate the domination of pure reason, but mysticism alone is dangerous. When confronted with A. Mickiewicz's mystical Messianism, Libelt defended rational philosophy. In his case, the negation of the *autocracy* of reason did not signify the renunciation of reason (rational philosophy). The point was, let us reiterate, to overcome its limitations by referring to features specific to Slavic peoples: imagination, a close connection with nature and a reluctance to abstract thinking. Among the numerous postulates formulated by K. Libelt as to the future *Slavic philosophy* there was also that concerning the necessity for resolving the issue of the personality of God and the immortality of the soul. German philosophy transformed these two concepts into abstract notions. Libelt suggested his own interpretation of these issues. He presented God as an interminable source of creation: *God did not create the world just once, but he continues to create it.*² The act of creation is constantly being repeated, producing ever new worlds. Everything that he creates (worlds and whatever they contain) is turned into being. The concept of God as a force continuously creating the world (in no moment is the world outside God, but it is within him constantly), embraces the philosophical concept of Providence and the presence of divine authority in the world.

This conception of God demonstrates an evident affinity with Neo-Platonism which penetrated Libelt's writings through the ideas of St. Augustine, Origen, and most prominently, Spinoza and Schelling. It is clearly pantheistic, although Libelt objected the application of this term to it. Defending himself against accusations concerning pantheism that were lodged by Catholic thinkers, he invoked the principles of *Slavic philosophy* that was to be a synthesis of the material and ideal worlds. Borrowing the term *higher synthesis* from Trentowski, Libelt disagreed both with associating his philo-

¹ K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. 240.

² K. Libelt, *Stwarzanie świata [Creating the World]* in: *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1831–1864 [Philosophy and Social Thought in 1831–1864]*, (ed.) A. Walicki, Warszawa 1977, p. 349.

sophy with pantheism interpreted narrowly as atheism, and with pantheism that equated God with reason. A. Walicki claims that

*it was only an attempt to defend himself against the term pantheism that prevented the philosopher from designating his own views as spiritual pantheism. Libelt's understanding of the omnipresence of the divine spirit was, after all, a type of the synthesis involving naturalist and idealist pantheisms.*¹

This spiritual pantheism was distinguished by the *rehabilitation of nature* on the one hand, and the *irrationality of the creative absolute*, on the other, pointing to the affinity between Libelt's ideas and those of Schelling's².

The idea of reconciling philosophy with religion is originally justified by Libelt through his concept termed *philosophy of derivative forms*. Form is generally associated with its external demonstrations, with what can be accessed sensually. Libelt juxtaposed these commonly held assumptions with the conception of forms *irrepresentable* par excellence and the so-called derivative forms. A form, to his understanding, is the *expression of content*. A material form expresses complete content, all qualities of matter. Hence,

*the form of an individual phenomenon cannot be represented per se. A stone, plant, man represent all that they are in themselves, that is complete forms of their complete contents, hence a representation that would be accessible sensually of such an identity [unity] of all qualities of a phenomenon is impossible.*³

Only the primary form, that is, shapes, is representable. Human sensuality is not, however, satisfied with what is representable by nature, but seeks to *represent to itself* also those forms that are irrepresentable. This leads to two derivative forms: the first one embraces mystical and philosophical imagination, arts and all types of science; the second one involves human work (a creative act). Derivative forms are human products (created by their *working imagination*). They are contained neither in God, because God is a primary being which was not created (*uncreated primariness*), nor in nature, which is a *created and constantly being created primariness*. These derivative forms emerge from human imagination governed by reason⁴. Being subjective, derivative forms have their origin in folk imagination. Primary forms (invisible) transform into derivative forms thanks to folk imagination. *Slavic philosophy* is a derivative form; hence it is rooted in the imagination of the common people. Derivative forms, similar to primary forms, are manifested

¹ A. Walicki, *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, p. 383.

² A. Walicki, *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, p. 383.

³ K. Libelt, *Formy nieprzedstawiane [Irrepresentable forms]* in: *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1831–1864*, p. 352.

⁴ K. Libelt, *Wyobraźnia ludu jako źródło filozofii [Folk Imagination as a Source of Philosophy]* in: *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1831–1864*, p. 354.

not only in man, but also in God and in the world. Derivative forms derived from divine primary forms include: anthropomorphism – religions, philosophy; cosmomorphism – mythologies, the world of angels, ghosts, saints; and hylomorphism – prophecies, clairvoyance, Messianism¹.

The project of *the philosophy of derivative forms* was not only an attempt to accomplish the objectives formulated by Libelt with regards to *Slavic philosophy*, but also a response to B. F. Trentowski's criticism. In his paper published in 1845, entitled *Can one learn national philosophy from common people and what features should this philosophy possess*, Trentowski radically rejects Libelt's project of *national philosophy*. According to the former, *national philosophy* cannot relate to the features of Polish common people (or any folk people for that matter). Although one may learn much from common people, this positively does not include philosophy. The common people should be released from *the shackles of the spirit of nature, that is, from an animal-like condition, immaturity and childhood* [...]². They should be freed from the pressure of necessity and made to feel like deity (self). It is possible to formulate a *national philosophy* for Poland, but *folk philosophy* is a chimera. Making philosophy folk-like is the final form of its popularization. It is appropriate for a poet, writer, teacher or priest, but not for a national philosopher. When exploring the essence of the common people, one can create anthropology or mythology, but not formulate *national philosophy*. Folk *wisdom*, glorified by Libelt, is actually magic permeated with the *Asian spirit*. This *Asian spirit* denotes mysticism, which is the nightmare of the Polish folk. Mysticism, the *Asian spirit*, must be defied by philosophy – the *European spirit*. Even if one learns *philosophy* from the folk, this *philosophy* would be neither national, nor Polish-folk. The spirit of the Polish common people does not differ from the spirit of any other common people.

Yet the Polish common people are characterised by specific features, hence the conclusion, according to Trentowski, that *national philosophy* cannot be formulated and the Polish common people exhaustively understood if the spirit of other nations and peoples is neglected³. When formulating the program of *national philosophy*, one needs to primarily consider the nation rather than the common people. What would have constituted Greek philosophy, Trentowski wondered, *had it been based on ancient Greek mythology or asked priests for advice? It is appropriate for Hesiod or Homer to draw on folk mythology, but not for Socrates or Plato*.⁴ Trentowski did not share Libelt's admiration of Romantic poetry. He believed that it was excessively loaded with mysticism and unrestrained fancy. He also disagreed with Libelt as regards the assessment of imagination. Libelt believed that a future *Slavic philosophy* should be the philosophy of *umnictwo*, that is, *the philosophy of*

¹ K. Libelt, *Wyobrażenia ludu jako źródło filozofii*, p. 353.

² B. F. Trentowski, *Czyż można uczyć się filozofii narodowej od ludu i jakie cechy mieć powinna też filozofia* [*Can one learn philosophy from common people and what features should this philosophy possess*] in: *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1831–1864*, p. 272.

³ B. F. Trentowski, *Czyż można uczyć się filozofii narodowej od ludu ...*, p. 278.

⁴ B. F. Trentowski, *Czyż można uczyć się filozofii narodowej od ludu ...*, p. 279.

imagination, whereas Trentowski was convinced that imagination had already resulted in too much damage to the Poles and that it needed to be tamed. Logic was to serve as an antidote for this excess of untamed imagination. Poles needed logical reasoning, rather than imagination. Trentowski most comprehensively explained and presented these ideas in his *Myślini, the Overview of National Logic*. Although Libelt – the philosopher rejected the main concepts of Trentowski’s philosophy, that is, *myst* and *jaźń* (self), he nevertheless employed many of the categories formulated by his predecessor. With regard to the formal framework, when constructing his own philosophy, Libelt used *Myślini* as his model. Trentowski noticed and appreciated the borrowings from his own writings.

A. Walicki suggests that *perhaps he hoped that this process of approximation would continue and that a discussion concerning national philosophy would convince [Libelt] that drawing inspiration from the poet was inappropriate*¹ (this obviously referred to A. Mickiewicz). Trentowski unreasonably feared excess of mysticism and folk mythology. The philosophy of *derivative forms* does not directly refer to mythology. Libelt’s ideas are soundly grounded in philosophy, emphasizing its superiority over mysticism. Although he treated such phenomena as clairvoyance, prophecies, and religious anthropomorphism as an expression of *living truths*, they were principally the subject of his philosophical reflection: *they became legitimated as phenomena, as products of human imagination, but simultaneously relativized as to their value*². Mysticism, folk mythology, Messianism are subjective phenomena, but of a divine provenience. Being of a divine origin, they contain some particle of truth. This truth, however, should not be made absolute. Libelt attempted to sanction the world of imagination in philosophical terms (legitimizing anthropomorphic representations of God as human-like or immortality as a prolongation of the earthly life). He acknowledged the supremacy of philosophy over mysticism and shared Trentowski’s conviction that the national spirit should not be hypostasised. Trentowski’s fears were in a sense groundless. *In a sense*, because in his philosophy of *derivative forms* Libelt did not resign from the premise that it is nationality understood as a common feature of the individuals that form the nation that substantially influences imagination, and that the national character is most powerfully revealed in common people. In this context, *the philosophy of derivative forms became a philosophy of the national collective imagination, objectified in language, art, science and creatively transforming the external objectivity of nature (work)*³.

IV Conclusion

K. Libelt, just like Trentowski, desired to unite extreme, contradictory

¹ A. Walicki, *Karola Libelta “Filozofia słowiańska” [Karol Libelt’s “Slavic Philosophy”]* in: K. Libelt, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, p. XXXII.

² A. Walicki, *Karola Libelta “Filozofia słowiańska”*, p. LXXXIV.

³ A. Walicki, *Karola Libelta “Filozofia słowiańska”*, pp. LXXV–XXVI.

philosophical approaches (rationalism with irrationalism, materialism with idealism), as well as philosophy (reason) with mysticism and religion. In his attempt to create a philosophy based on imagination, he approximated mysticism and religion, while remaining within the grounds of philosophy, because he acknowledged anthropomorphic representations as *far from adequate*. A tendency towards synthesis excludes understanding philosophy as a field autonomous with respect to religion. Being a deeply religious person, Libelt could not reject religion. However, not only did he interpret it consistently with Orthodox beliefs, but he also attempted to interpret some dogmas philosophically. Like the majority of Polish thinkers of his time, he was convinced that philosophy could no longer only imitate foreign philosophies; that a time had come for Polish philosophy, following the German model, *to become rooted in the Polish soil*. This did not indicate, however, a complete detachment from older philosophical traditions. Trentowski used to say that philosophy was built with old bricks.

The point is that these bricks must be patterned in a new way – one's own way. One needs to critically evaluate the major achievements of European philosophy and introduce something new to it. What Trentowski and Libelt (this also refers to other representatives of the Polish *national philosophy*) had in common was the idea that the specific objective of Polish philosophy is an attempt to unite contradictory philosophical approaches, practical French philosophy with German idealism in particular. *National philosophy* was not meant to be something entirely novel; it was not, as A. Walicki stressed, *to become some new beginning in the general history of thought, or confine itself to national provincialism*¹. The founders of programs of *national philosophy* were convinced that the philosophy formulated by them was national because the national spirit and character are reflected in each independent product of human thought. They differed, however, as Trentowski's and Libelt's concepts demonstrate, in their understanding of the *national principle*. Trentowski believed that the Polish character is revealed in its ability for higher synthesis and action; Libelt associated nationality with the features (the worldview) of the Polish common people (Slavs). Trentowski criticised the program of Libelt's national Slavic philosophy because he thought that Poles needed philosophy and logic, rather than fancy and Romantic poetry. He did not notice that Libelt fought only with the one-sidedness of German idealists' reason; he overlooked that Libelt's aim was not to eliminate reason, but to demonstrate its limitations, and that he finally acknowledged the supremacy of philosophy over mysticism. Trentowski deemed Libelt's program of national philosophy absurd, and even dangerous; national philosophy cannot emerge from the folk. The development of national culture should be presided over by philosophers, rather than poets, mystics, or Messiahs. Trentowski believed that if Poles were to become distinguished in the field of philosophy, they

¹ A. Walicki, *Uniwersalizm i narodowość w polskiej myśli filozoficznej i koncepcjach mesjanistycznych epok i Romantyzmu (po roku 1831)* [Universalism and Nationality in Polish Philosophical Thought and Messianic Concepts of the Romantic Period (after 1831)] in: J. Kłoczowski (ed.), *Uniwersalizm i swoistość kultury polskiej*, vol. 2, p. 52.

needed to account for the legacy of other nations; an effort focused on elevating the general level of the culture was necessary first and Polish *Middle Ages-like* Catholicism had to be reformed if Poles wanted to leave the backwater of civilization. In Trentowski's assessment, Libelt wanted to remain in this backwater.

Despite these differences and internal disputes, Polish founders of *national philosophy* understood that neglecting the issues of general philosophy and the philosophical legacies of other nations would mean an intellectual oblivion. No one desired isolation from Western philosophy (culture), but simultaneously cultural uniformity was rejected, because *no one wanted a Europeanization of Poles that would erase specific features of Polish heritage, language included*¹. The founders of programs of *national philosophy* wanted Polish philosophy to enrich European philosophy with new elements. The national character was linked with universalism. Although to a different degree, both Trentowski's and Libelt's programs of *national philosophy*, as well as those of Cieszkowski, Kamiński and Dembowski, attempted to balance the universal (searching for truth) and the particular (national). *National philosophy* was not to serve particular interests exclusively. Otherwise it would have condemned itself to isolation. Polish founders of *national philosophy* understood that philosophy could be national on the condition that it enriched general philosophy; that it did not resign from searching for the truth. Otherwise it would become nationalistic and would have nothing to do with philosophy as such; it would actually be no longer philosophy.

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¹ J. Jedlicki, *Narodowość a cywilizacja* [Nationality and Civilisation] in: J. Kłoczowski (ed.), *Uniwersalizm i swoistość kultury polskiej*, vol. 2, p. 18.

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