

**THE QUEST FOR UNITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS:
CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL
MODERNITY IN INTERWAR LITHUANIA**

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Abstract

The dissertation explores Catholic intellectuals' reactions to the challenges of political modernity in interwar Lithuania. In particular, it zooms on the ways in which a circle of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals, centred around the philosopher Stasys Šalkauskis (1886–1941), imagined the relationship between religion and modernity. For this reason, the dissertation follows the rise and fall of the so-called philosophy of culture (*Kulturphilosophie*), a discipline that was popular among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers during the interwar period, focusing on the period of the 1930s. By tracing the lives and thought of Catholic intellectuals, the thesis investigates how various trends within Catholicism, Neo-Scholasticism, corporatist social thought, conservative ideologies, and Lithuanian nationalism interacted with each other. In reconstructing the thought of these intellectuals, the thesis pays particular attention to how Lithuanian Catholic thinkers responded to the changing circumstances of international politics and the challenges of political modernity. Invented by Lithuanian Catholic philosophers as a theoretical framework to reflect on the contemporary world and Lithuanian national individuality, philosophy of culture was tasked to reconcile religion and the modern world.

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Introduction

The thesis reconstructs the history of philosophy of culture (*Kulturphilosophie*) in interwar Lithuania, a discipline that was immensely popular among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers. The thesis offers a re-examination of its history, exploring the ways in which philosophical reflections were entangled with the political life of the day. It traces the history of philosophy of culture from its origins at the turn of the twentieth century to its eventual disintegration in 1940, focusing on how Catholic thinkers responded to the challenges of political modernity.

After the First World War, when autocratic monarchies in East Central Europe were replaced by newly founded nation-states while simultaneously the faith in progress characteristic to nineteenth-century liberalism was seriously diminished, several ideological projects emerged that sought to establish a new universalism in European politics. In the words of the historian Alexander De Grand, “Europeans during the period from the end of World War I to the outbreak of World War II were preoccupied, even haunted, by a quest for unity and fear of disintegration. The idea that things were coming apart, that some basic mechanism in western civilization had broken down, and that only revolutionary change or heroic measures could set things right again dominated politics on both left and right.”¹ Many interwar thinkers experienced their time as a moment of immense crisis.² They reflected on this moment of *Sattelzeit*, trying to propose historical explanations as well as solutions to the perceived temporal crisis of modernity. In this context, Catholicism became a force

¹ Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism: Its Origins and Development* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), x.

² Balázs Trencsényi, “The Crisis of Modernity—Modernity as Crisis: Toward a Typology of Crisis Discourses in Interwar East Central Europe and Beyond,” *Critical Theories of Crisis in Europe: From Weimar to the Euro*, ed. Poul F. Kjær, and Niklas Olsen (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 37-52.

that claimed superiority over secular ideologies, offering intellectual resources for a certain utopia of the spiritually centered community.

While the sense of crisis of European culture was present, the elites of newly founded states took it as an opportunity to advance their national cultures. Philosophy of culture developed in interwar Lithuania was a perfect illustration of this trend. Its popularity among Catholic Lithuanian intellectuals highlighted the particular importance of issues related to national culture in interwar East Central Europe, where, after the collapse of the European empires following the First World War, the elites of the newly established nation-states were eager to engage in a “race” for progress and modernization. In East Central Europe, the idea of modernization was marked by the sense of East-West asymmetry, where the West was also linked with the notions of Europe and civilization.³ The evident enthusiasm of Lithuanian intellectuals expressed the general tendency evident in the region to “catch up” with the more “cultured” nations of the West.⁴ Therefore, following the establishment of Lithuanian statehood, a major effort was made to modernize the largely rural country.⁵ At the same time, it should be noted that, although the drive to “Westernize” was strong, these attempts at modernization were followed by a tendency of simultaneous admiration and rejection of Western modernity inherent in the regional dynamics,

³ Martin Kohlrusch, *Brokers of Modernity: East Central Europe and the Rise of Modernist Architects, 1910-1950* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019), 19-22.

⁴ For the cases of East Central Europe, see, Victor Neumann, “Political Cultures in Eastern and Central Europe,” *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 228-46.

⁵ Historical studies on efforts to modernize in interwar Lithuania is slowly growing, see Marija Drėmaitė (ed.), *Architecture of Optimism: The Kaunas Phenomenon, 1918-1940* (Vilnius: Lapas, 2018); Marija Drėmaitė, *Progreso meteoras: Modernizacija ir pramonės architektūra Lietuvoje 1918-1940 m.* [The Meteor of Progress: Modernization and Industrial Architecture in Lithuania, 1918-1940] (Vilnius: Lapas, 2016); Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and Nerijus Šepetys (eds.), *Fortsetzung folgt: Im Zuge der Moderne. Ein Jahrhundert Litauen 1918-2018* (Vilnius: Lithuanian Culture Institute, 2017); Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, *Dailė ir valstybė: dailės gyvenimas Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918-1940* [Art and the state: Art life in the Republic of Lithuania 1918-1940] (Kaunas: Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio dailės muziejus, 2003); Jolita Mulevičiūtė, *Modernizmo link: Dailės gyvenimas Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918-1940* [Towards modernism: Art life in the Republic of Lithuania, 1918-1940] (Kaunas: Kultūros ir meno institutas, 2001).

provoking controversies in defense of local traditions that become especially pronounced by the 1930s.⁶ In this context, the philosophy of culture provided a theoretical framework for the interpretation of Lithuanian culture and the reflection on European modernity in general, therefore, the study of its history allows us to examine the changing interplay between Catholics' perceptions of modernity, their religious commitments, and their understanding of national belonging.

In a period steeped in the enthusiasm for national progress, the Lithuanian brand of philosophy of culture reflected these general modernizing tendencies, simultaneously remaining a distinctly Catholic project to reconcile religion and modernity, aimed to find a balance between the two in the Lithuanian national project. Intellectually, Catholicism was the native environment for this branch of philosophy that flourished in interwar Lithuania. The institutionalization of this philosophical discipline coincided with the aftermath of the First World War, when the Church sought to maintain its status in the newly formed states of East Central Europe, which were predominantly Catholic in religious composition, perceiving it as part of the wider agenda of the re-Christianization of the old continent.⁷ At the moment when the Vatican launched its campaign to counter the rise of communism and liberalism, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals lend their support to the nation-state, making it the unquestionable element in their thinking of how to accommodate Catholicism to the realities of modern politics. Lithuanian Catholic thinkers believed that national independence should be followed by the Europeanisation of national culture.

⁶ For a perceptive take on these asymmetrical dynamics between the West and the East, see Ferenc Laczó, "Rethinking Eastern Europe in European Studies: Creating Symmetry Through Interdisciplinarity," *Interdisciplinarity in the Scholarly Life Cycle: Learning by Example in Humanities and Social Science Research*, ed. by Karin Bijsterveld and Aagje Swinnen (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 79-98, here at: 87.

⁷ Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 4-7.

Lithuanian Catholicism was shaped by the experiences of the Russian Empire, which officially put ideological emphasis on “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.” Since the nineteenth century, imperial bureaucrats sought strengthening the state, and its policies were directed towards Russification and promotion of Orthodoxy in Lithuania.⁸ A number of such policies were implemented, including the closure of monasteries, prohibition to open new churches, and closure of the old ones, and introduction of compulsory attendance at Orthodox services for schoolchildren.⁹ In short, Catholics in the Russian Empire were in a situation of *Kulturkampf*, in which the tension was between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Differently than in Germany, however, Catholics in Russia did not have the means of parliamentarianism to advocate for their interests. In this respect, the situation of Catholics was not that dissimilar to other Lithuanian political parties, because their participation in Duma after 1905 was rather limited and short-lived. This, in turn, meant that the tradition of Catholicism that emerged in Lithuania after the First World War had no experience of parliamentary democracy, however, with the strongly held negative view on the *ancien régime* of the Empire.

In Lithuania, the emergence of philosophical reflection on the relationship between Catholicism and the nation coincided with the political and economic reforms in the Russian Empire. The revoking of the ban on printing texts in the Lithuanian language in the Latin alphabet in 1904 was particularly important, as it existed for the past forty years since the January Uprising of 1863. In 1905, the citizens of the Russian Empire were granted rights that previously were entirely missing, including the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, and the freedom of assembly as

⁸ Darius Staliūnas, “Imperial Nationality Policy and the Russian Version of the History of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *Central Europe* 8 (2) (2010): 146-57.

⁹ Egidijus Aleksandravičius and Antanas Kulakauskas, *Carų valdžioje: XIX amžiaus Lietuva* [Under the rule of tzars: Lithuania in the 19th century] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1996), 163-94.

well as the right to participate in elections to the State Duma.¹⁰ These reforms indicated the beginning of a new period in Lithuanian cultural life, which was marked by the launch of a whole series of Catholic periodicals and the proliferation of religious literature. During the early twentieth century, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers began to reflect on the problems of modern culture, and this period was marked by the growing debate among the Lithuanian Catholic clergy on the role of religion in the Lithuanian national project.¹¹ These discussions at the turn of the century were an important context in the emergence of philosophy of culture in Lithuania.

Since the first decades of the twentieth century, Catholic elites in Lithuania were particularly prone to take a key role in shaping national life, and philosophy of culture perfectly reflected this attitude. Modern Lithuanian Catholicism rested on the peasant element to whom feudal values or monarchist sentiments were completely alien, which meant that Lithuanian Catholics were completely loyal to the nation-state.¹² The absence of nostalgia for the *ancién regime* predisposed Lithuanian Catholics to navigate the modern world of politics with greater ease than their counterparts from France, where monarchist sympathies were an important factor of political mobilization well into the 1920s, or Germany and some of the post-Habsburg nation-states of East Central Europe, where the members of old nobility struggled to adapt to

¹⁰ Romas Juzefovičius, *Lietuvos humanitarų mokslo organizacijos 1918-1940* [Lithuanian humanities academic organisations 1918-1940] (Vilnius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2007), 23-4.

¹¹ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania (1918-1940): Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 52-60; Arūnas Streikus, “Laisvosios sklaidos galimybių laikotarpis (1905-1940)” [The period of free expression, 1905-1940], *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje istorija*, ed. Vytautas Ališauskas (Vilnius: Aidai, 2006), 391-3.

¹² This did not preclude the rise of the monarchist movement among the pro-German Lithuanian politicians in the last years of the First World War, however, the steady disappearance of the monarchist project from Lithuanian political agenda indicates that this was an outcome of international political conjuncture, in which the pressures from German politicians and diplomats played a key role. For more on the Lithuanian monarchists, see Alfonsas Eidintas, *Antanas Smetona and His Lithuania: From the National Liberation Movement to an Authoritarian Regime (1893-1940)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 77-87.

the realities of modern politics fueled with nationalist sentiment.¹³ After 1918, Lithuanian Catholics emerged as willing participants in the political life of the parliamentary republic, with the Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party as a major political force, even if tensions between Christianity and liberal political institutions remained one of the focal points in the political discussions. This was evident from the fact that the LCDP won three consecutive parliamentary elections in the period of 1920-1926, and even delegated one of its leaders, Aleksandras Stulginskis, to become the President of the country. Philosophy of culture, a discipline that in Lithuania was overrepresented by Catholic thinkers, exposed particularly well this modern cultural orientation of Lithuanian Catholicism, at the same giving it a more philosophical form.

Despite the enthusiasm of the 1920s, the following decade saw a growing sense of crisis. Responding to the challenges of political modernity as well as to the shock of the Great Depression, by the mid-1930s Catholic thinkers throughout Europe proposed visions of new spiritual totality that had to permeate every aspect of human life, and in this way to overcome the shortcomings of secular modernity. Facing the crisis, they appeared to be confident in the superiority of Christian moral and metaphysical teachings, increasingly invoking the “primacy of the spiritual.”¹⁴ In this respect, philosophy of culture developed by Lithuanian Catholic thinkers was an attempt to offer a total solution for the perceived contemporary crisis of European culture. Interwar Lithuanian Catholic thinkers were consumed by the problem of the European “spiritual” crisis, looking for new ways of renewing the modern world.

¹³ Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 100-29.

Believing that the crisis of modern European civilization was primarily a spiritual one, they sought to find spiritual solutions. Therefore, by drawing on their writings, the thesis follows the diverse ways in which these Catholic thinkers tackled the perceived crisis, reconstructing the changing ways in which they imagined the role of Christianity in the modern world.

The argument is based on a simple and, once articulated, obvious proposition that the history of interwar philosophy in Lithuania could not be properly understood without considering the political context of the 1920s and 1930s Europe, just like the development of interwar philosophy or indeed any other academic discipline in Germany could not be understood without the taking into account the rise of National Socialism.¹⁵ The experience of social, economic, and political upheavals shaped their reflections, and it is impossible to grasp what these thinkers were dealing with in their philosophical writings without necessarily explicitly acknowledging this fact.¹⁶ The Lithuanian version of philosophy of culture was a form of thought that engaged with its times and with reflections on modernity more generally. As Catholics, these Lithuanian thinkers believed that ideas were the vehicle that shaped history and saw philosophy as a domain of struggle between different worldviews. In their interpretations of European history, interwar Catholic thinkers frequently invoked the importance of worldview in shaping the spheres of politics and culture.¹⁷ I argue that their reflections were not merely abstract intellectual constructions divorced from the

¹⁵ Literature on the topic is vast, and here one must mention an absorbing debate on Heidegger and the relationship between his philosophy and politics. For a standard account of the issue, see Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). For the most recent round of discussions on Heidegger, see Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks 1931-1941* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017); Andrew J. Mitchell and Peter Trawny (eds.), *Heidegger's Black Notebooks: Responses to Anti-Semitism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

¹⁶ For an excellent example of this approach, see Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *What Is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion, and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), chapt. 1.

realities of life but that these theories were often linked to the most pressing social and political issues of the day. Therefore, to understand the history of philosophy of culture in interwar Lithuania, it is important to look at the broader social and political context of that period, which witnessed the rise of fascism and communism as well as the Great Depression of the 1930s.

During the 1920s and 1930s, many Catholic thinkers in Lithuania engaged with questions of social and political nature, and this must be acknowledged when studying the history of interwar philosophy. Philosophy of culture was considered a discipline of practical philosophy, and thus close to, though not identical with, moral and political philosophy. Evidently steeped in concerns with political modernity, it provided both a language of analysis for the contemporary world and an interpretative framework for the conceptualization of collective identity. It is telling that during the interwar period discipline that received the most attention from Lithuanian philosophers was philosophy of culture, which, some argued, became the principal philosophical discipline in interwar Lithuania.¹⁸ Looking into how Catholic philosophy, and especially into the philosophy of culture that was institutionalized and developed in Lithuania, the thesis will explore the interconnection between philosophy and politics, showing how philosophical frameworks impacted Catholic perceptions of contemporary Lithuanian and European political life, and how political life shaped their philosophical reflections.

In Lithuania, philosophy of culture was rooted first and foremost in the Catholic philosophy of its times, and as such must be considered a part of the neo-Thomist reasoning on modern society and politics. The revival of Neo-Scholasticism initiated

¹⁸ Leonidas Donskis, "Editors Introduction: Mapping Inter-War Lithuanian Philosophy," Vasily Sesemann, *Aesthetics*, ed. Leonidas Donskis (Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi, 2007), xi.

by Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) opened up the conceptual space for a Catholic dialogue with modern thought when Neo-Scholasticism was simultaneously encouraged to incorporate its “positive” aspects while rejecting those that were perceived as incompatible with Christian doctrinal commitments.¹⁹ Usurpingly, for interwar Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals, Neo-Scholasticism provided the main frame of reference. Neo-scholastic thought was brought to Lithuania by several Catholic thinkers, but the most influential were those who studied at the universities of Leuven and Fribourg, where they were introduced to the “progressive” Neo-Scholasticism represented by Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851–1926), the leading Catholic philosopher in Belgium. In 1889, Mercier established the Higher Institute of Philosophy (*Institut supérieur de Philosophie*) at the University of Leuven, which shaped significantly the reception of neo-scholastic philosophy across Europe.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a time when the relationship between the state and the Church was marked by fierce hostility in France, Germany, and Italy, it was the countries like Belgium and Switzerland that became important bastions of Catholic academic learning, attracting students from all over Europe, Lithuanians including, to study Catholic philosophy and theology.²⁰ After the First World War, these Lithuanian thinkers, who had studied abroad, put Kaunas on the map of European Neo-Scholasticism, and the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas became one of the easternmost academic centers of Catholic philosophy in Europe. As a part of the newly founded university in 1922, the Faculty

¹⁹ For excellent studies of neo-Thomist social and political thought, see Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers, and Peter Heyrman (eds.), *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880–1960* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022); Rajesh Heynicks, Samuel O'Connor Perks, and Stéphane Symons (eds.), *So What's New About Scholasticism? How Neo-Thomism Helped Shape the Twentieth Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

²⁰ For an excellent historical overview of this period, see Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People: A History of European Catholicism Since 1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 141–59.

was the hub that gathered key Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals. There, philosophy of culture was institutionalized as a separate philosophical discipline and was taught throughout the interwar period.

The main protagonists of the thesis acted as transmitters of ideas from abroad as well as their interpreters, who oftentimes succeeded to institutionalize their interpretations. They were professors at university, clerks who served in numerous institutional frameworks, founders and editors of journals and newspapers, participants in scholarly and political debates, and, at certain moments, even political actors. The combination of these identities allowed these Catholic thinkers to be heard by the public and their ideas to shape the minds of Catholic laity and clergy. Among these intellectuals, the neo-scholastic philosopher Stasys Šalkauskis (1886–1941) played the central role. Originally trained in law, Šalkauskis became interested in philosophy in the early 1910s, when he was introduced to the work of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov as well as the French essayist Ernest Hello. After defending his doctoral thesis on Vladimir Solovyov at the University of Fribourg and turning into a proponent of Neo-Scholasticism in the meantime, Šalkauskis became the thinker who played the most important role in shaping the discipline of philosophy of culture in interwar Lithuania.

Šalkauskis sought to create a philosophy that could overcome the contradictions of the times and serve as the basis of national worldview. He attempted to forge a holistic worldview inspired by Christianity and capable of addressing the most urgent concerns of the contemporary world that was marked by the advent of popular representation, increasing urbanization, and growing sense among both the educated

and the masses of the secularization of European culture.²¹ Fashioning himself as the pedagogue of the nation, he developed a distinctive brand of philosophy of culture that was based on a creative appropriation of neo-scholastic concepts. As a neo-scholastic philosopher, Šalkauskis created a philosophy of culture with the explicit task of reconciling religion and modernity, stressing that Christianity was both “eternal” and “modern.” Only Catholicism, he claimed, was capable of solving the contradictions of the modern world: “No exclusivism can find a place in the Catholic worldview, because it is not inseparably linked to any time, to any nation, to any societal group. In this sense it is transcendent. And at the same time, every one-sidedness that contains even a particle of truth is organically subsumed into its universal synthesis. It unites the individual truths scattered in one-sided theories into one organic whole, in which there is [...] a concordance of opposites. In other words, *the Catholic worldview embodies the genius of synthesis and unity.*”²² Šalkauskis also proposed an influential vision of Lithuanian national vocation and, based on these ideas, educated a whole generation of Catholic intellectuals, who in the 1930s, following the example of their teacher, undertook the task of advancing Lithuanian culture. During the interwar period, these thinkers shaped the overall Catholic *Weltanschauung* in Lithuania. Therefore, an examination of the history of this discipline reveals not only the intellectual trajectory of Šalkauskis and his students but also allows us to understand the much broader changes in Lithuanian Catholicism and the different ways in which Lithuanian Catholic thinkers responded to the challenges of political modernity.

²¹ For the debates at the turn of the century, see J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

²² Stasys Šalkauskis, “Ideologiniai dabarties krizių pagrindai ir katalikų pasaulėžiūra” [The ideological foundations of contemporary crises and the Catholic worldview], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 66.

The thesis presents the history of this particular branch of philosophy of culture, formulated and institutionalized in interwar Lithuania, from the first attempts of Lithuanian Catholic thinkers to explore the relationship between modern culture and religion in the first decade of the twentieth century to the disintegration of this discipline following the outbreak of the Second World War. It traces the history of philosophy of culture in interwar Lithuania from its origins in the work of Catholic thinkers such as Aleksandras Dambrauskas (1860–1938) at the beginning of the twentieth century; its subsequent institutionalization following the emergence of the Lithuanian state, when it became a study subject at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas; as well as the challenges that the discipline faced when the Second World War broke. Šalkauskis played a key role, not only by developing philosophy of culture into academic discipline but also by educating a whole generation of Catholic intellectuals, such as Pranas Dielininkaitis (1902–1942), Zenonas Ivinskis (1908–1971), Juozas Keliuotis (1902–1983), Antanas Maceina (1908–1987), Ignas Skrupskelis (1903–1943), and Stasys Yla (1908–1983), all of whom followed their teacher's advocated agenda. In the historiography, this group of Šalkauskis's pupils is known as the Young Catholics.²³ The thesis focuses on the period of the 1930s in particular because this was the focal point in the history of philosophy of culture in Lithuania: during this decade several Šalkauskis's former students emerged as the leading Catholic intellectuals in the country, taking over the agenda and ideas of their teacher, and developing them in new directions in response to the European great politics.

In retrospect, these intellectuals could be described as representing the Lithuanian School of philosophy of culture – a name that they did not use, nor did they see

²³ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, "1936-ųjų metų deklaracija" [The manifesto of 1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2012, No. 6, 380-6.

themselves as belonging to any kind of “school.” However, this retrospective name allows drawing attention to the neo-scholastic philosopher Šalkauskis and the circle of his colleagues and students that took inspiration from his writings on national pedagogy and his conceptualizations of the relationship between Christianity and modernity. Not all of them were philosophers in a strict sense, although they did consider Šalkauskis as their teacher. Therefore, the thesis explores the group of loosely related intellectuals that represented a diverse range of disciplines, investigating how philosophy of culture shaped other fields in Lithuanian intellectual life, such as history, theology, sociology, and art criticism. The thesis particularly focuses on the period of the 1930s, which was the focal point in the history of philosophy of culture in Lithuania: at that time several Šalkauskis’s former students emerged as leading Catholic intellectuals, taking over the agenda and ideas of their teacher to advance national culture and reconcile religion and modernity. The history of philosophy of culture, therefore, is meant to depict not simply the development of one philosophical discipline, but rather a wide range of its influences on other fields as well as its social and political effects.

Šalkauskis and his educated intellectuals played a key role in shaping the Catholic intellectual life in interwar Lithuania. Just like their teacher, many of his former students became professors at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, which was the hub of neo-scholastic thought in a country where religious orders had little influence on Catholic intellectual life. In the nineteenth century, during the time of the Russian Empire, when Lithuania was part of it, religious orders experienced great difficulties to operate, resulting in a gradual decrease in Catholic monasteries throughout the nineteenth century. The Jesuit Order, for example, was expelled by Czar Alexander I from the Russian Empire in 1820, and the order did not return to Lithuania until 1923

when they arrived from Germany. Similarly, the Dominican Order, whose monasteries were closed in the Russian Empire throughout the nineteenth century, was restored in Lithuania only in 1932.²⁴ Therefore, the two great religious orders that shaped interwar Catholic social and political thought in the rest of Catholic Europe, remained marginal in Lithuania, lacking both the intellectual capacity and financial means to become a significant force in interwar Lithuania. In this respect, interwar Lithuania was unique in comparison to other Catholic countries in Europe, which meant that the dissemination and interpretation of neo-scholastic ideas were largely left to the professors at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas.

To date, the intimate relationship between philosophical reflections and the political situation at home and on the European stage remained poorly understood in the research on philosophy of culture in interwar Lithuania. The political aspect of philosophy was effectively highlighted by Arūnas Sverdiolas, who suggested that the interwar philosophy of culture responded to the need of the National Revival for conceptualizing modern Lithuanian culture.²⁵ However, even Sverdiolas did not develop this insight about the connection between philosophy and politics further, organizing his fundamental history of philosophy of culture in Lithuania, which remains the standard work on the topic, as a history of philosophical problems, while at the same time giving attention to individual thinkers who tackled them.²⁶ This approach, however insightful it might be in providing European philosophical context to the history of philosophy in Lithuania, largely missed its important link with the

²⁴ Regina Laukaitytė, *Lietuvos vienuolijos: XX a. istorijos bruožai* [Religious orders in Lithuania: Features of 20th century history] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 1997), 59-73.

²⁵ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūros filosofija Lietuvoje* [Philosophy of culture in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1983), 14-5.

²⁶ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012). For Sverdiolas's most recent iteration of the idea that in his philosophy of culture Šalkauskis reflected on the experience of the National Revival, see Arūnas Sverdiolas, "Stasio Šalkauskio lietuvių kultūros projektas" [Stasys Šalkauskis's project of Lithuanian culture], *Darbai ir dienos* 74 (2020): 11-33.

politics of the day. Therefore, the political and philosophical commitments of interwar Catholic intellectuals were often treated separately. Many historical accounts approached the political attitudes of interwar Catholic thinkers without looking closely enough at their theoretical constructions, producing narratives where the practical concerns of actors discounted their adherence to ideas. Meanwhile, analyzes of interwar philosophy, while offering perceptive interpretations and acknowledging the political potential of interwar thought, largely overlooked the “extra-textual” contexts.²⁷ One exception in this respect is the work of Leonidas Donskis, who recognized the link between intellectual life and political modernity in interwar Lithuania. However, his work is marked by a tendency to critique rather than contextualize, ultimately falling short of providing the historically sensitive reconstruction of these intellectuals’ thinking.²⁸ The thesis follows the path pioneered by Donskis, bridging the gap between the two evident trends to argue that these Catholic thinkers were often stimulated by the political concerns of their days, and adequate understanding of their ideas requires their reconstruction against the backdrop of their social and political contexts. Thus, the thesis discusses their political commitments while simultaneously eyeing the philosophical ones, exploring how they were interlinked. This approach permits a substantial rewriting of the history of

²⁷ For the former, see Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania (1918-1940): Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014); Mindaugas Tamošaitis and Artūras Svarauskas, *Nuo Kazio Griniaus iki Antano Smetonos: Valdžios ir opozicijos santykiai Lietuvoje 1926-1940 metais* [From Kazys Grinius to Antanas Smetona: Relations between the government and the opposition in Lithuania, 1926-1940] (Vilnius: Gimtasis žodis, 2014), 175-8. For the latter, see Alvydas Jokubaitis, “Stasys Šalkauskis and Antanas Maceina as Political Philosophers,” *Lithuanian Political Science Yearbook 2000* (Vilnius: Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, 2001), 1-19; Alvydas Jokubaitis and Linas Jokubaitis, “Politinė Stasio Šalkauskio kultūros filosofijos prasmė” [Political meaning of Stasys Šalkauskis’ philosophy of culture], *Politologija* 100 (4) (2020): 8-33; Nerija Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų tremtiniai: Lietuviškosios tapatybės paieškos ir Europos vizijos XX a.* [The exiles of Northern Athens: The search for Lithuanian identity and visions of Europe in the 20th century] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2004).

²⁸ Leonidas Donskis, “On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Lithuanian Philosophy in the Twentieth Century,” *Studies in East European Thought* 54 (2002): 179-206; Leonidas Donskis, *Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism and Social Criticism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), chapt. 1.

philosophy in interwar Lithuania, showing that its most important philosophical debates cannot be understood without locating them in a broader social, cultural, and political context.

In Lithuania, the intellectual history of interwar Catholicism remains a subject of great controversy, primarily because of Lithuanian Catholics' political involvement during the Second World War. Much of the debate revolves around the ideas advocated by Maceina, one of the key protagonists of the thesis and the most prominent student of Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture. Donskis for instance asserted that "Maceina openly sympathized with all the fascistoid and even openly fascist regimes he knew, with all the fascistoid ideologies he knew, with the most reactionary, darkest and most irrational ideas of his epoch."²⁹ Similarly, Liūtas Mockūnas described Maceina and the intellectuals close to him as representing a version of home-grown fascism.³⁰ Trying to explain the extensive involvement of Catholics in the so-called June Uprising of 1941 and the subsequently established Provisional Government under the German military administration, they portrayed the Lithuanian Catholic intellectual life of the 1930s as impregnated with fascist tendencies.³¹ The opposing camp,

²⁹ Leonidas Donskis, "Antanas Maceina: Doktrininis intelektualas XX amžiaus lietuvių kultūroje" [Antanas Maceina: Doctrinal intellectual in 20th century Lithuanian culture], *Tarp Karlailio ir Klaipėdos: Visuomenės ir kultūros kritikos etiudai*, (Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 1997), 188-228; Leonidas Donskis, "Dar kartą apie Antano Maceinos socialinę filosofiją," [Once again about the social philosophy of Antanas Maceina], *Lietuvos žydų žudynių byla: Dokumentų ir straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001), 774-9.

³⁰ Liūtas Mockūnas, "Vienos knygos recenzijos istorija" [A history of one book's review], *Lietuvos žydų žudynių byla: Dokumentų ir straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001), 780-4; Liūtas Mockūnas, "Prie lietuviškojo fašizmo ištakų" [At the origins of Lithuanian fascism], *Lietuvos žydų žudynių byla: Dokumentų ir straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001), 785-94; Liūtas Mockūnas, *Pavargęs herojus: Jonas Deksnys trijų žvalgybų tarnyboje* [A tired hero: Jonas Deksnys in the service of three intelligence services] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1997), 53-7.

³¹ The most recent reiteration of this position was given by Tomas Venclova, in his closing lecture to the international conference "The Dividing Past: the USSR-Germany War and Narratives of Mass Violence in Central Eastern Europe" held by the Lithuanian Historical Institute in June 2021 stating: "A slightly different strain of right-wing radicals was the anti-Semitic group of the Young Catholics, who talked about the creation of an 'organic state,' leaning not so much towards the Nazis, but towards Mussolini's corporatism, towards Franco and Salazar (in the same way as the left leaned towards Lenin and Stalin). [...] It is easy to compare this group with the Romanian national and religious radicals – Codreanu, Eliade, Cioran – whom Eugen Ionesco, who initially sided with them but later broke away,

meanwhile, described the same group of Catholic intellectuals as opponents of authoritarianism that were ideologically close to the ideals of democracy — the “true liberals” of the period, as the most prominent advocate of this view, Kęstutis Skrupskelis, once formulated — coming to diametrically opposed conclusions.³² The legacy of Maceina, and Šalkauskis’s philosophical project by implication, remains contested to this day, and debates surrounding this thinker are not confined to the world of scholarship but are a subject of a much wider discussion on historical memory and the politics of history in Lithuania, which has a high political voltage.

Despite the discussions and controversies surrounding the Young Catholics, their lives have received too little attention. Most of the available biographies were written more than fifty years ago and do not reflect the current state of research, while some of the newer accounts do not address the more problematic aspects of interwar Catholicism in Lithuania.³³ Moreover, there has been only a limited recent interest in the history of philosophy in interwar Lithuania, and the excellent case studies did not touch on

portrayed in his famous play *Rhinoceros*. In a word, we are witnessing the same processes of fascistization in pre-war Lithuania as we saw throughout Europe.” Tomas Venclova, “Atminties konfliktai: Kas priimtina ir kas nepriimtina” [Conflicts of memory: What is acceptable and what is unacceptable], *LRT*, accessed on January 25, 2022, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/1433306/tomas-venclova-atminties-konfliktai-kas-priimtina-ir-kas-nepriimtina>.

³² Kęstutis Skrupskelis, “Tariamasis jaunųjų katalikų kartos fašizmas” [The alleged fascism of the Young Catholic generation], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidas*, 1999, No. 4, 212-27; Kęstutis Skrupskelis, “Organiškumas, katalikų akcija ir liberalioji srovė” [Organicism, Catholic action and the liberal current], *Kultūros barai*, 2004, No. 1, 70-6; Algimantas Jankauskas, “Organiškos valstybės koncepcija Lietuvoje: kurejai, raida, vertinimai” [The concept of an organic state in Lithuania: creators, development, assessments], *I laisvę*, 1995, No. 122, 57-68; 1996, No. 123, 23-33; Laurynas Peluritis, “Nepasaulėžiūrinė politika – naujo politinio mąstymo projektas” [Non-worldview politics – a project of new political thinking], *Filosofija išeivijoje*, ed. Rūta Marija Vabalaitė (Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2015), 139-65; Laurynas Peluritis, “Pilnutinės demokratijos projekto vientisumo problema” [Problem of integrity of the integral democracy project], *Politologija*, 2021, No. 3 (103): 8-40.

³³ For some excellent exceptions, see Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ignas Skrupskelis: Asmenybė ir laikmetis* [Ignas Skrupskelis: Personality and times] (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014); Vyginas Bronius Pšibilskis, *Kazys Pakštas ir atsarginė Lietuva* [Kazys Pakštas and the reserve Lithuania] (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2021).

Catholic thinkers.³⁴ The most important take on individual Lithuanian Catholic philosophers remain introductory essays to their collected writings, focused on the presentation of their most important biographical facts and key ideas.³⁵ This situation led to an oversimplified portrayal of figures like Maceina as nationalist thinkers, often championed by current conservative nationalists who gloss over the complexities of interwar Lithuanian Catholicism.³⁶ The lack of interest in the biographies of the Young Catholics has resulted in an oversight of the importance of their intellectual formation and the experiences as young intellectuals in the turbulent 1930s in shaping their political views. It is, therefore, essential to study the evolution of Maceina's thought up close while simultaneously zooming in on the individual biographies and intellectual genealogies of other major interwar Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, reconstructing their various intellectual influences and disclosing a wealth of resources on which these thinkers drew. Only through the understanding of the political and intellectual contexts of the interwar years, it is possible to shed light on the political dimension of their work and to make sense of the major philosophical debates of the 1930s. Additionally, this focus on reconstructing the background of

³⁴ Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, *Vasily Sesemann: Experience, Formalism, and the Question of Being* (Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi, 2006); Dalius Jonkus, *Vosyliaus Sezemano filosofija: Savęs pažinimo ir estetišės patirties fenomenologija* [The philosophy of Vosylus Sesseman: Phenomenology of self-knowledge and aesthetic experience] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2015); Dominic Rubin, *The Life and Thought of Lev Karsavin: Strength Made Perfect in Weakness* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013).

³⁵ Juozas Girnius, "Šalkauskio asmuo, darbai ir poveikis" [Šalkauskis's person, works and influence], in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 5-44; Juozas Girnius, "Pranas Kuraitis," in Pranas Kuraitis, *Filosofijos raštų rinktinė* [Collected philosophical writings], ed. Antanas Vaičiulaitis (Chicago: Ateitis, 1990), 305-76; Vytautas Kubilius, "Kito pasaulio esu žmogus" [I am a man of another world], in Juozas Keliuotis, *Meno tragizmas: Studijos ir straipsniai apie literatūrą ir meną*, ed. Rūta Jasionienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1997), 542-55; Arūnas Sverdiolas "Antano Maceinos filosofinis kelias" [The philosophical way of Antanas Maceina], in Antanas Maceina, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991), 5-19; Arūnas Sverdiolas, "Stasio Šalkauskio filosofija" [The philosophy of Stasys Šalkauskis], in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 5-25.

³⁶ For an example of such treatment, see Vytautas Radžvilas, "A. Maceinos kūrybos vertinimo klausimu: kada grius tylos siena?" [On the evaluation of Maceina's work: When will the wall of silence fall?], *Ateitis*, 2008, No. 4, 3-9.

philosophy of culture will provide an opportunity to reevaluate its impact on the intellectual, cultural, and political life of interwar Lithuania.

The past decade witnessed a major boom in studying the intellectual history of twentieth-century Catholicism, exposing complex negotiations that Catholic thinkers undertook in responding to the challenges of political modernity and showing the persisting political importance of religion in twentieth-century Europe. A lot of attention was given to Western Europe, where Christian Democracy emerged as key political force after the Second World War.³⁷ The existing scholarship has shed light on the ways in which Catholic thinkers engaged with secular intellectual traditions such as Marxism, existentialism, and phenomenology, revealing the interactions between Catholic philosophy and theology and the broader intellectual landscape.³⁸ Much of the existing literature has adopted the “trans-war” perspective, explaining the complex ways in which Christianity was transformed throughout the twentieth century. This perspective has many merits and is particularly fruitful when exploring

³⁷ Jacopo Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation Italian Catholic Culture and the Idea of International Community, 1963–1978* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017); Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945–1968* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020); Emmanuel Gerard and Gerd-Rainer Horn (eds.), *Left Catholicism, 1943–1955: Catholics and Society in Western Europe at the Point of Liberation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001); Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *What Is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion, and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); William L. Patch, *Christian Democratic Workers and the Forging of German Democracy, 1920–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Or Rosenboim, *Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Daniela Saresella, *Catholics and Communists in Twentieth-Century Italy: Between Conflict and Dialogue* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

³⁸ Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019); Wim Decock, Bart Raymaekers, and Peter Heyrman (eds.), *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880–1960* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022); Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Rajesh Heynicks and Jan de Maeyer (eds.), *The Maritain Factor: Taking Religion Into Interwar Modernism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010); Rajesh Heynicks, Samuel O'Connor Perks, and Stéphane Symons (eds.), *So What's New About Scholasticism? How Neo-Thomism Helped Shape the Twentieth Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); Rocco Rubini, *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

how the Church adapted to the world dominated by democratic politics and liberalism, showing Catholic contributions to the creation of post-war political order and the transformation of official Catholic teachings in response to the rise of fascism and communism.³⁹ Much less attention, however, was devoted to East Central Europe, which remains underrepresented in the literature despite its prominent role in the history of political Catholicism and Christian Democracy.⁴⁰ A considerable body of literature has explored the political interactions between religion and nationalism in the region, problematizing their connection in the light of the Second World War.⁴¹ However, the existing literature has also underscored the diversity of religious imaginations and practices, emphasizing the need for a more nuanced understanding that moves beyond simplistic ethnonationalist explanations. Scholars have called for a serious consideration of the theological and subjective motivations that drove Catholic

³⁹ Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019); James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics and the Origins of the European Convention* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Emiel Lamberts, *The Struggle with Leviathan: Social Responses to the Omnipotence of the State, 1815–1965* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016); Paul Misner, *Catholic Labor Movements in Europe: Social Thought and Action, 1914–1965* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015); Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Sarah Shortall and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins (eds.), *Christianity and Human Rights Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Noah Beneza Strote, *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); John Carter Wood, *This is Your Hour: Christian Intellectuals in Britain and the Crisis of Europe, 1937–49* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

⁴⁰ Michael Gehler, Piotr H. Kosicki, and Helmut Wohnout (eds.), *Christian Democracy and the Fall of Communism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019); Piotr H. Kosicki and Wolfram Kaiser (eds.), *Political Exile in the Global Twentieth Century: Catholic Christian Democrats in Europe and the Americas* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021); Piotr H. Kosicki and Sławomir Łukasiewicz (eds.), *Christian Democracy across the Iron Curtain: Europe Redefined* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Thomas Lorman, *The Making of the Slovak People's Party: Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in Early 20th-Century Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

⁴¹ Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Mikołaj Stanisław Kunicki, *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism, and Communism in Twentieth-Century Poland—The Politics of Bolesław Piasecki* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012); Robert B. McCormick, *Croatia Under Ante Pavelic: America, the Ustase and Croatian Genocide in World War II* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

actors, thus capturing the complexities of religious dynamics in the region.⁴² By delving into Catholic intellectual traditions in East Central Europe, recent research has illuminated the diverse responses to the challenges posed by industrialization and democratic politics, indicating Catholic intellectuals' investment in rethinking the connection between religion and modernity. Equally importantly, it has shown the interconnectedness of Catholic intellectual life across the twentieth-century Europe, uncovering existing international philosophical and personal connections between Catholics thinkers.⁴³

The specific political dilemma that the Church faced since the late nineteenth century was one of finding ways of engaging with modern political institutions while maintaining its “intransigent” hostility to them.⁴⁴ Ever since the proclamation of the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) by Pius IX, the Church adopted a stance that stressed an absolute division between Catholicism and the contemporary world.⁴⁵ However, after Pope Leo XIII's call to challenge secular modernity in the late nineteenth century, the following period in European history was characterized by considerable experimentation of Catholic elites in politics and culture. While the Church itself remained a conservative force, there was an intra-Catholic diversity in the responses to the rise of mass politics and urban modernity. This allowed Stephen Schloesser to argue that in the interwar period gradually “Catholicism came to be imagined by

⁴² Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter-Szűcs (eds.), *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2010); James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Maria Falina, *Religion and Politics in Interwar Yugoslavia: Serbian Nationalism and East Orthodox Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023); Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴³ Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and “Revolution,” 1891–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁴⁴ Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *What Is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion, and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 33.

⁴⁵ Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age, 1740-1958* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 53.

certain cultural and intellectual elites not only as being thoroughly compatible with ‘modernity,’ but even more emphatically, as constituting the truest expression of ‘modernity.’ Its eternal truths were capable of infinite adaptation to ever-changing circumstances.”⁴⁶ According to James Chappel, the experiences of the 1930s played a pivotal role in shaping the strategies employed by Catholics to address the social and political challenges of the twentieth century. These experiences led to a transformation in their views on the relationship between Catholicism and the modern secular state.⁴⁷ In light of the existing scholarship, the project aims to contribute to the ongoing debate by examining the distinctive Catholic modernities that emerged in interwar East Central Europe and its connections with wider history of twentieth-century Catholicism. It focuses on Lithuanian Catholic thinkers and their responses to social and political pressures, and their unique contributions to the broader discourse on Catholicism and modernity during the first half of the twentieth century.

The thesis focuses on what I call, for lack of a better term, the politics of the spiritual, which combined the anti-materialist tendencies of Catholic thought with a counter-political stance in the modern world. The politics of the spiritual were aimed at overcoming the secularist tendencies of modernity through a certain moral and spiritual renewal that would reconfigure relations between men by the creation of a new spiritual totality. A characteristic example of this spiritualist brand of politics was the “non-conformist” personalism of the French *Esprit* group, those political commitments remain notoriously hard to define. As Sarah Shortall has noted, “the defining feature of Catholic personalism was precisely its political ambivalence – the

⁴⁶ Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919–1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 5.

⁴⁷ James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

way it resisted the logic of the right-left political spectrum.”⁴⁸ In the 1930s, these French Catholic personalists sought for a vaguely defined spiritual “third way,” formulating a program that went beyond usual political forms and ideological frameworks.⁴⁹ These spiritualist ideologies, oftentimes being deliberately formulated in opposition to party politics, were characterized by their overall rejection of secular political categories. Emmanuel Mounier, for instance, asserted that his “non-conformist” personalism aspired to “seek ways beyond those of fascism, communism, and the decadent bourgeois world.”⁵⁰ In this usage, as Piotr Kosicki put it, the term “person” implied these Catholic thinkers’ commitment to social renewal and the pursuit of a just society, rooted in their faith in Roman Catholicism.⁵¹

By designing their political projects in ways that escaped the taxonomies of modern politics, these interwar thinkers made their views seem elusive, as the usual language of secular politics became inadequate to name their political projects in precise terms. The vagueness of the personalist ideas coupled with their articulated rejection of existing political frameworks allowed Zeev Sternhell and some others to argue that in the 1930s the *Esprit* group propagated an ideology that structurally was very close to fascism, falling into the category of “neither right nor left.”⁵² I, on the other hand, would like to point out that the politics of the spiritual prevalent in Europe during the 1930s, and by no means limited to Catholic thinkers alone, were much more

⁴⁸ Sarah Shortall, “Theology and the Politics of Christian Human Rights,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79 (3) (2018): 447.

⁴⁹ On the rhetoric of the “third way” in interwar France, see Steve Bastow, “Third Way Discourse in Inter-war France,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 6 (2) (2001): 169-89; Katherine Jane Davies, “A ‘Third Way’ Catholic Intellectual: Charles Du Bos, Tragedy, and Ethics in Interwar Paris,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71 (4) (2010): 637-59; Mike Hawkins, “Corporatism and Third Way Discourses in Inter-war France,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 7 (3) (2002): 301-14.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Mounier, *A Personalist Manifesto* (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), 1.

⁵¹ Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and “Revolution,” 1891–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 10.

⁵² Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right, nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

multifaceted than such categories of fascism and authoritarianism, taken over from political science and therefore lacking historical sensitivity, allows them to be, and that they ultimately misrepresent their thought. In fact, understanding their work on its own terms reveals Catholic personalists as innovative thinkers who oftentimes held anti-statist views and stood at the heart of some of the most pertinent intellectual debates in the twentieth century.⁵³ Perhaps, as some of the recent studies indicate, it is the task of historians to find new ways to talk about the politics that drew on religious inspiration during the interwar period.⁵⁴

Interwar Lithuania was not a periphery of European political modernity, but rather one of its epicenters. During this period, Kaunas was the intellectual laboratory of modern Lithuania, where diverse intellectual traditions from various European national contexts, which otherwise would not have been brought together, were transferred, appropriated, modified, combined in new ways, and tested against each other, producing unique ideological formations. Unlike philosophers from the major philosophical traditions like Germany or France, who developed distinguishable philosophical schools by largely interacting with the writings of their co-national colleagues, intellectuals from East Central Europe were much more open to influences from abroad. Thinkers from this region participated in the European market of ideas, often bringing back concepts and understandings from the different national

⁵³ Seth D. Armus, "The Eternal Enemy: Emmanuel Mounier's Esprit and French Anti-Americanism," *French Historical Studies* 24 (2) (2001): 271-304; Edward Baring, "Humanist Pretensions: Catholics, Communists, and Sartre's Struggle for Existentialism in Postwar France," *Modern Intellectual History* 7 (3) (2010): 581-609; James Chappel, "The Catholic Origins of Totalitarian Theory in Interwar Europe," *Modern Intellectual History* 8 (3) (2011): 561-90; Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 120-68; H. S. Jones, "Catholic Intellectuals and the Invention of Pluralism in France," *Modern Intellectual History* 18 (2) (2021): 497-519; Samuel Moyn, "Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights," *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 85-106; Sarah Shortall, "Theology and the Politics of Christian Human Rights," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79 (3) (2018): 445-60.

⁵⁴ Sarah Shortall in conversation with Vilius Kubekas, "Sarah Shortall on the Counter-Politics of Theology," *Review of Democracy*, September 5, 2022, <https://revdem.ceu.edu/2022/05/03/sarah-shortall-on-the-counter-politics-of-theology/>.

frameworks of the “old” Europe and creatively adapting them to their local contexts.⁵⁵ Many interwar Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals, for instance, received academic degrees from various universities in Western Europe, later becoming important public figures and taking key institutional positions in interwar Lithuania. These thinkers acted as both the transmitters of Catholic ideas and their interpreters, who embedded these ideas in numerous institutional frameworks, institutionalizing their particular interpretations at the University of Kaunas, and disseminating them through their lectures and writings.

To understand Lithuanian Catholic thinkers’ cultural and political orientations, it is important to explore their reception of Thomas Aquinas. Following the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) by Leo XIII, the thought of Aquinas was presented as providing perennial wisdom that had to be consulted by Catholics of modern times. In response, Catholic thinkers embraced neo-Thomism as the primary means of comprehending the contemporary world.⁵⁶ The prominent French neo-scholastic Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges, for instance, could “repeat that a Catholic work, because Catholic, is universal in every way. It appeals independently of any age to every age [...]. St. Thomas is profoundly original, for it is proper to genius to make what it creates appear fresh and verdant. It scatters seeds, which, though as old as truth itself, seem capable of germinating for ever.”⁵⁷ This statement is an illustration of a belief shared by contemporary neo-scholastic thinkers that Aquinas’ writings were a repository of timeless truths waiting to be carried into the present. Nevertheless, there was no agreement among Catholic thinkers in their interpretations of Aquinas, and they

⁵⁵ Diana Mishkova, “Introduction: Towards a Framework for Studying the Politics of National Peculiarity in the 19th Century,” *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009), 1-43.

⁵⁶ See for instance Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrangé* (South Bend, IND: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005), 80-113.

⁵⁷ Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges, *The Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy* (Springfield, ILL: Templegate Publishers, 1956), 11.

differed greatly among themselves, often approaching his writings in different and even contrasting ways. Therefore, to note the differences between Catholic intellectuals, one must examine their individual views on Aquinas.

In the thesis, the terms neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism are used interchangeably. Some scholars have argued for a more precise distinction between the two, implying that politically neo-Thomism was more inclined towards the accommodation of Catholicism to human rights and representative democracy, while Neo-Scholasticism was more prone to authoritarian solutions.⁵⁸ However, it is important to note that the meanings and usage of neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism differed in specific national contexts. While the differentiation between neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism may hold relevance when discussing Catholicism in interwar France, its applicability in Lithuania is less clear. Nevertheless, scholars have recognized varying degrees of conservatism and heterogeneity among the neo-Thomist thinkers in Lithuania, particularly in terms of their willingness to engage in dialogue with secular schools of thought.⁵⁹ The status of neo-Thomism as the “official philosophy” of the Church made Aquinas a key reference point in Catholic intellectual life, and many interwar Lithuanian Catholic thinkers felt the need to define their views by articulating their relationship with the ideas of the medieval Angelic Doctor. Their accounts on the history of Western philosophy were not only an attempt to understand the past but also to make sense of the present, and often signaled their own political and cultural orientations. These accounts could have served both for the reinforcement of established orthodoxy as

⁵⁸ Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 50-84.

⁵⁹ Romanas Plečkaitis, “Filosofija VDU” [Philosophy at the University of Kaunas], *Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas: Mokslas ir visuomenė, 1922-1940* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, 2002), 166-7.

well as to challenge it, opening up alternative perspectives of understanding the relationship between Christianity and the modern world.⁶⁰ The thesis, therefore, will uncover different perceptions of Aquinas, showing that the narratives that Lithuanian Catholic thinkers told about the history of Western thought and the place of Aquinas in it reflected their attitudes toward political modernity.

The thesis combines a close reading of Catholic debates with a reflection on the interaction between ideas and institutions. It is based on the analysis of different genres of intellectual production, including books, articles, reviews, public lectures, and literary fiction as well as personal correspondence, diaries, and retrospective autobiographical recollections. I have consulted the most important Catholic outlets of the time, including *Darbininkas* (*The Worker*), *Draugija* (*The Community*), *Lietuvos Mokykla* (*The Lithuanian School*), *Logos*, *Naujoji Romuva* (*The New Sanctuary*), *Pavasaris* (*The Spring*), *Romuva* (*The Sanctuary*), *Tiesos Kelias* (*The Way of Truth*), *Soter*, *Židinys* (*The Hearth*), *XX Amžius* (*The Twentieth Century*), as well as other periodicals relevant to the research, *Athenaeum*, *Kultūra* (*The Culture*), *Lietuvos Žinios* (*The Lithuanian News*), *Lietuvos Aidas* (*The Lithuanian Echo*), *Mūsų Kraštas* (*Our Country*), *Mūsų Vilnius* (*Our Vilnius*), *Vairas* (*The Helm*). Additionally, I have consulted international publications such as *Ateneum*, *Gazeta Polska*, and *Prąd* from Poland, *Divus Thomas* from Switzerland, and *Études*, *La Vie Intellectuelle*, *L'Œuvre*, and *Mercure de France* from France whenever they addressed Lithuanian themes or were relevant to the Lithuanian context. Therefore, the thesis primarily relies on publicly available materials as its main source base. This choice is based on the project's focus on analyzing the circulation of ideas and political languages, their

⁶⁰ Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021); Jerry Z. Muller, *Professor of Apocalypse: The Many Lives of Jacob Taubes* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022), 487-94.

movement across borders, institutions, and generations, and the changes they undergo through continuous reinterpretations. Ideas are inherently social and, therefore, these changes can be tracked only by examining texts that were widely accessible. In addition to this, I consulted archival materials held at Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Institute of History, and the Manuscripts Reading Room of Vilnius University.

Some words must be said about methodology. The project is based on the premise that both philosophy and politics must be understood as inherently historical phenomena. They undergo evolution and transformation over time, and any examination of their relationship must account for these changes. The history of political thought is taken to be the history of political discourse that, as J. G. A. Pocock suggested, has “its own vocabulary, rules, preconditions and implications, tone and style” which the historian has to learn to recognize.⁶¹ Consequently, ideas should not be studied as timeless constructions, but rather as the products of efforts to understand specific historical realities and intervene into concrete intellectual debates.⁶² When delving into the history of philosophy of culture in Lithuania, we find a dynamic set of ideas that emerged in response to various social and political tensions and that cannot be reduced merely to academic discipline or simply summarized as a political program. To reconstruct the intellectual milieu to which the discipline of philosophy of culture and the thinkers associated with it belonged, these thinkers are situated within a wider

⁶¹ J. G. A. Pocock, “The Concept of a Language and the *metier d'historien*: Some Considerations on Practice,” *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19-38.

⁶² Iain Hampsher-Monk, “The History of Political Thought and the Political History of Thought,” *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 159-74; Reinhart Koselleck, “Social History and *Begriffsgeschichte*,” *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, and Frank van Vree (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 23-35; Melvin Richter, “Charting the History of Political and Social Concepts,” *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9-25.

network of Catholic intellectuals and institutions, paying particular attention to Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals' studies abroad. This invites us to take a closer look at the intellectual environment in which these Catholic thinkers were socialized and educated, and the focus on the history of Neo-Scholasticism in particular points out the importance of academic institutions, journals, and philosophical societies in facilitating the circulation of ideas and shaping Catholic intellectual culture across Europe.⁶³ The attention to their advanced studies abroad will shed more light on the European context in which these Lithuanian Catholic thinkers operated and developed their thought. Moreover, the thesis asks how to better integrate religious thought into the intellectual history of modern Europe, which despite the recent advances in the field remains a relatively understudied aspect of historiography.

The thesis is organized into five chapters. **Chapter 1** discusses the origins of the Lithuanian philosophy of culture and its articulation in the works of Šalkauskis, the most important Lithuanian Catholic thinker of the interwar period. This chapter reconstructs the intellectual biography of the young Šalkauskis, exploring his understanding of the relationship between religion and modern culture as well as how he engaged with the Lithuanian national project. To situate him in the broader history of Catholic thought in Lithuania, we will first examine the reception of Neo-Scholasticism in Lithuania, focusing on Mečislovas Reinys (1884–1953) and Pranas Kuraitis (1883–1964), two thinkers that studied at the major center of neo-scholastic thought at the time, the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven, as well as on Dambrauskas, the most important Lithuanian Catholic thinker of the first decade of the twentieth century, who provided an alternative vision of modern Catholicism. It also discusses the institutions that promoted and disseminated the Neo-

⁶³ Edward Baring, "Ideas on the Move: Context in Transnational Intellectual History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77 (4) (2016): 567-87.

Scholastic ideas and were of paramount importance to the formation of Catholic intellectual culture in Lithuania.

Chapter 2 analyses the further development of the Lithuanian philosophy of culture in the works of young Catholic thinkers, who all studied with Šalkauskis and were influenced by his work. Catholic thinkers on which this chapter focuses, the art critic Keliuotis, the sociologist Dielininkaitis, and the philosopher Maceina, among others, provided important contributions to the formation of Catholic thought in interwar Lithuania. Their writings reveal the complex ways in which young Catholic intellectuals engaged with the project of cultural advancement and how they appropriated and reinterpreted Šalkauskis's ideas along the way. In an attempt to reconstruct their worldview, this chapter will address how these young Catholic thinkers, who touched on the topic of the relationship between culture and religion, reinterpreted Šalkauskis's ideas in the 1930s. Further, it also explores how the young Catholic intellectuals employed their religious commitments while seeking to promote the advancement of national culture. The focus on the young Catholic intellectuals allows us to understand the generational changes among Catholic thinkers in Lithuania, which were particularly evident from their changed relationship with Neo-Scholasticism.

Chapter 3 examines the Young Catholics' debates on an organic state in the autumn of 1935 and winter of 1936, whose outcome was their jointly written manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State" (1936). The focus on the manifesto allows us to explore their political vision, shedding light on the major sources of inspiration in developing the Young Catholics' views on the relationship between the state and the individual. Importantly, the chapter will also examine the relationship between

Šalkauskis's and the young Catholics' political views. The investigation of their interventions in the discussion on political reforms in Lithuania allows us to explore the political implications of Šalkauskis's developed philosophy of culture. Focus on Maceina and Dielininkaitis, both of whom significantly contributed to the discussion on the new political order in Lithuania, will allow placing the Young Catholics' political views in the broader context of the corporatist reforms in interwar Europe. The chapter will also look into the responses that the manifesto provoked by other political actors, such as the Christian Democrats and the supporters of the Smetona regime, and Šalkauskis himself. Although the vision of political order that the Young Catholics had never realized, the analysis of it nevertheless reveals the most significant aspects of their political thought.

Chapter 4 deals with Lithuanian Catholics' understanding of social and political reality in 1936 and 1938. The Great Depression of the 1930s as well as the growing threat of communism, which was particularly evident after the breakout of the Spanish Civil War, resulted in the perception of a certain European spiritual crisis. A symbolic moment was the 1936 conference organized by the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science, which was dedicated to this issue, where Lithuanian Catholic elites gathered to reflect on the shortcomings of secular modernity, and how Christian teachings could resolve the perceived crisis. Another important moment was the conference of Catholic Action, organized in December 1936, where Maceina gave his famous lecture entitled "The Social Justice of Catholics," which caused a great debate among Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals about how Catholicism could bring forth a moral and spiritual reform. Focusing on the Young Catholics' views on the present state of European culture, the thesis explores their discursive behavior and their political reasoning, providing evidence of how they sought to reframe their religious and

national commitments in the context of the perceived moral and spiritual crisis. This chapter, therefore, how the intensified experience of crisis has affected Catholic intellectuals' understanding of the role that Christianity had to play in the modern world.

Chapter 5 explores Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals' reactions to the heightened international tensions starting with the *Anschluss* of Austria and the Sudeten crisis in 1938, and the subsequent breakout of the Second World War. The chapter shows that the international conflict was perceived as posing a threat to the survival of the Lithuanian national project, significantly influencing Young Catholics' political and philosophical commitments. It will explore different ways in which Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals proposed to solve the threat that the prospect of the upcoming war posed to the Lithuanian national project. The chapter delves deeper into the writings of the Young Catholics concerning the means of protecting the Lithuanian nation and the state, noting how by the late 1930s their political views had changed since their 1936 manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State." It compares the examples of Dielininkaitis, Maceina, and Šalkauskis, all of whom chose divergent paths to respond to the threats of international politics. Investigating the responses of the Young Catholics to the war, and how they deployed the ideas about the importance of the human "person" and the primacy of the spiritual, the chapter advances our understanding of personalist thought and the Catholic intellectual tradition in Europe. The chapter also brings up the case of Povilas Jakas, who began questioning the meaningfulness of Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture, comparing it to Maceina's reformulation of Šalkauskis's main ideas. This chapter, therefore, investigates the relationship between Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals' political commitments and their philosophical inclinations, assessing that during the years

between 1938 and 1940 Lithuanian Catholicism was profoundly reshaped in response of the changing international circumstances.

1. Neo-Scholasticism and the Origins of Philosophy of Culture in Lithuania

The history of modern Lithuanian Catholic thought began far away from Lithuania. Between 1900 and 1940, Lithuanian students studied Catholic philosophy and theology at more than forty different foreign institutions, becoming transmitters of the newly established neo-scholastic thought to Lithuania.¹ Before the First World War, when Lithuania was a province in the Russian Empire, many Lithuanian Catholics pursued their Catholic education at the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy, the most important institution of Catholic academic learning in the Russian Empire, while others also studied at universities in the West, mostly in Austria, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. After returning home, these students became the interpreters and popularizers of the Neo-Scholasticism in Lithuania.

The chapter discusses the intellectual context in which philosophy of culture, a philosophical discipline that became particularly popular among interwar Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, emerged. A look into neo-scholastic thinkers of the early twentieth century gives us an understanding of the origins of modern Catholic thought in interwar Lithuania. The revival of Neo-Scholasticism, started by Pope Leo XIII, almost perfectly coincided with the National Revival in Lithuania, pointing to the importance of Neo-Scholasticism to Catholic engagement with Lithuanian nationalism in the early twentieth century. The adoption of Neo-Scholasticism opened up a path, although not the only one available, to modernize Catholic thought, with Catholics gradually embracing both modern scientific thought and, equally importantly, to modern politics. Thus, the history of the reception of Neo-Scholasticism and its

¹ Alfonsas Vaišvila, *Logikos mokslas Lietuvoje* [The science of logic in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1980), 47.

institutionalization in Lithuania was also the history of the modernization of Catholicism.

The chapter focuses on four individuals, who in the first decades of the twentieth century traveled between Kaunas, Sankt Petersburg, Moscow, Samarkand, Leuven, and Fribourg exploring how Catholicism could become a major intellectual force in the modern world. Mečislovas Reinys and Pranas Kuraitis, two young Catholic priests who traveled from Lithuanian theological seminaries to Sankt Petersburg and Leuven, became influential representatives of neo-scholastic thought in Lithuania after the First World War. Their intellectual development shows the importance of the Leuven School of Neo-Scholasticism on Catholic intellectual culture in Lithuania. Meanwhile, Aleksandras Dambrauskas, who moved between Lithuania and Sankt Petersburg since the 1880s, studied philosophy at the University of Sankt Petersburg and later at the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy, becoming the most important Lithuanian Catholic intellectual before the First World War. Stasys Šalkauskis studied philosophy at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, later appropriating neo-scholastic concepts to develop philosophy of culture in interwar Lithuania. These two thinkers' intellectual biographies demonstrate the influence of Russian religious thought on Lithuanian Catholicism at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the Russian thinker Vladimir Soloviev becoming an important intellectual ally against the tendencies of positivism, materialism, and agnosticism that they encountered at the universities of the Russian Empire. After the First World War, Reinys, Kuraitis, and Šalkauskis became important figures in Lithuanian Catholic intellectual life, while Dambrauskas, who before the war was one of the major Catholic thinkers in Lithuania, was marginalized. It is important to understand why that happened and what it says about Lithuanian Catholicism.

1. 1. Neo-Scholasticism and the Leuven School

The revival of scholastic philosophy was launched by Pope Leo XIII, who endured the thought of the medieval scholastic Thomas Aquinas, suggesting that it had to become the standard of modern Catholic thought. In this encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), which was subtitled “On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy,” the Pope called “to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas.”² By stressing the permanent value of Thomism, Leo XIII asserted that it had to give a foundation of knowledge to modern thought, approaching scholastic philosophy as the way to confront the materialism and skepticism of modern times. Leo XIII asserted that Catholic philosophers had to draw inspiration from Thomas Aquinas, urging to establish new universities that could undertake the role of renewing modern thought: “Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others. Let the universities already founded or to be founded by you illustrate and defend this doctrine, and use it for the refutation of prevailing errors.”³

As commentators the encyclical pointed out, in its aim to respond to the challenges of modernity the revival of Thomism was both an intellectual and political event. It was only one element in the wider program of Leo XIII to respond to the problems of modern society. One may remember that in addition to the launching of the neo-

² Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* [On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy], sec. 31, accessed on September 5, 2022, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html

³ Ibid.

scholastic movement, Leo XIII also initiated the rise of social Catholicism.⁴ The revival of Thomism had to reverse the social and political developments in modern life and restore the dominance of Catholicism in public life, because, according to Leo XIII, modern social and political problems were rooted in erroneous philosophical assumptions that brought confusion in the minds of the modern men:

Whoso turns his attention to the bitter strifes of these days and seeks a reason for the troubles that vex public and private life must come to the conclusion that a fruitful cause of the evils which now afflict, as well as those which threaten, us lies in this: that false conclusions concerning divine and human things, which originated in the schools of philosophy, have now crept into all the orders of the State, and have been accepted by the common consent of the masses. For, since it is in the very nature of man to follow the guide of reason in his actions, if his intellect sins at all his will soon follows; and thus it happens that false opinions, whose seat is in the understanding, influence human actions and pervert them.⁵

The encyclical contrasted the detrimental tendencies and false conclusions of modern thought with the clarity of scholastic philosophy. To tackle social and political problems effectively, the erroneous philosophical teachings had to be countered first.

The encyclical had lasting institutional consequences, with the thought of Thomas Aquinas being elevated into the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. After the publication of *Aeterni Patris*, neo-scholastic philosophy gained an institutional and financial strength unmatched by any other school of philosophy in Europe. Soon after its publication, with the support of the Catholic Church, a web of academic institutions, societies, and journals dedicated to the study of scholastic philosophy emerged, establishing Neo-Scholasticism as the main framework of thought for Catholic philosophers and theologians. The extensive Catholic institutional infrastructure allowed Neo-Scholasticism in the following decades to rapidly spread

⁴ James Hennesey, "Leo XIII's Thomistic Revival: A Political and Philosophical Event," *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage. A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure*, ed. David Tracy, *Journal of Religion* supplement 58 (1978): S185–97.

⁵ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* [On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy], sec. 2, accessed on September 5, 2022, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html

throughout Europe.⁶ Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, therefore, became the cornerstone of Catholic intellectual life, the status that remained virtually unchanged until the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Therefore, for nearly a century Catholic thought was centered on the teachings of the Angelic Doctor.

The revival of scholastic thought was instrumental in modernizing Catholicism. In the rendition of the Pope, Thomas Aquinas provided a robust response to the challenges of modern world. Grounded in the thought of Aquinas, modern Catholic thinking was supposed to accommodate the Church to modern intellectual trends, even those that were hostile to religion. The restoration of the wisdom of Thomas Aquinas, Leo XIII claimed, had to serve for “the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences.”⁷ Aquinas was perceived as an example of such reconciliation in his lifetime. As Edward Baring explained, “Leo was confident that Thomism could help Catholics engage with a seemingly hostile form of non-Catholic thought, because it had done so before: during his lifetime, Aquinas had been instrumental to the Christian appropriation of Aristotle.”⁸

For our purposes, it is important to concentrate on the particular interpretation of the encyclical that was advanced and institutionalized at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven, which at the turn of the century became renowned internationally as the preeminent center of neo-scholastic thought. This was a version of Neo-Scholasticism that was institutionalized in Lithuania, with some of the graduates from the Leuven School taking teaching positions at the newly founded

⁶ See esp. Edward Baring, “Ideas on the Move: Context in Transnational Intellectual History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77 (4) (2016): 567-87.

Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* [On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy], sec. 31, accessed on September 5, 2022, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html.

⁸ Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 29.

University of Kaunas after the First World War. After the proclamation of *Aeterni Patris*, the University of Leuven emerged as the hotspot of Thomist revival, in which the young professor and the later Cardinal and Primate of Belgium Désiré Mercier (1851–1926) played the key role.⁹ Following Mercier’s lead, in a short time, the University of Leuven became known in Europe for its innovative blend of Thomism with modern science.

In 1894, with the support from Leo XIII, Mercier founded the Higher Institute of Philosophy (*Institut Supérieure de Philosophie*), where philosophy was combined with empirical sciences; the newly established Institute began publishing the neo-scholastic journal *Revue Néo-Scholastique*, those the motto “Nova et vetera” perfectly described the ambition of the newly emerging Leuven School of Neo-Scholasticism.¹⁰ Besides historical studies of medieval philosophy, the “progressive” Catholic thinkers strove to keep up with the advances of modern science and philosophy. As one contemporary historian of Neo-Scholasticism has pointed out, the neo-scholastics of the Leuven School sought to enter into a dialogue with their own time by bringing philosophy into consultation with science: “Catholic philosophers would thus frankly enter into the spirit of our time, and cease to be looked upon as mere apologists of their Creed,” aiming instead “to become true scientists, to construct laboratories, to make experiments, and [...] to find in St. Thomas himself the reconciliation of science and philosophy.”¹¹ They claimed that the philosophy and theology of the medieval thinkers contained the principles that were instrumental to interpreting the findings of modern sciences correctly and integrating them into a Christian worldview.

⁹ Roger Aubert, “Désiré Mercier and the Origins of the Institute of Philosophy,” *Cardinal Mercier: A Memoir*, ed. David Boileau (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), viii–xxv.

¹⁰ For the early history of the Higher Institute of Philosophy see Gerd Van Riel, “Désiré Mercier and the Foundation of the Higher Institute of Philosophy (1879-1906),” accessed on September 22, 2022, <https://hiw.kuleuven.be/en/about-us/history-hiw>.

¹¹ Joseph Louis Perrier, *The Revival of Scholastic Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1909), 219.

Several things set the Higher Institute of Philosophy apart from other places of Catholic philosophical instruction. One clear difference was that studies at the Institute were not reserved exclusively for the clergy, and its student body consisted of both the ecclesiastics and the young laymen. Secondly, besides the usual philosophical disciplines of logic, metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, moral and social philosophy as well as theodicy, which formed the core of the curriculum in traditional Catholic learning, students at the Institute had classes in modern sciences, such as physics, chemistry, general biology, anatomy, physiology, psycho-psychology as well as economic and political sciences. Thirdly, instead of instructing and publishing in Latin, the professors at the Leuven School adopted French as their working language, opening up Catholic thought to a productive dialogue with modern philosophy and science.¹² Leuven, however, was an exception among Catholic academic institutions, and in most other places, the symbiosis of the medieval and the new did not begin immediately.¹³

The so-called Leuven School of neo-scholastic philosophy was characterized by its engagement with modern scientific and philosophical schools and at the same time remaining faithful to the Thomist spirit. The philosophers of Leuven maintained that Catholics could participate in the shaping of modern thought only by opening up to scientific advances. Mercier held a view that none of the modern philosophical schools had a privileged position concerning modern science – they all began their reasoning from the same scientific data, however, they all made different conclusions from it. If so, then it was entirely possible to reject the secular schools of thought

¹² Désiré Mercier “Teaching at the School of Leuven and the Gregorian University,” *Cardinal Mercier’s Philosophical Essays: A Study of Neo-Scholasticism*, ed. David Boileau (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 509-10.

¹³ Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 32-3.

without rejecting the advances of modern science: “This multiplicity of diverse and opposed systems which approach the same scientific facts is the manifest proof that modern thought does not come from facts that are updated in every way by the discovery of learned men in true philosophical synthesis.”¹⁴ He envisioned Neo-Scholasticism as the most scientific philosophy of all, capable of continuously incorporating the newest results of modern science:

The philosophy of the 20th century is yet to be made. The neo-Thomists have the ambition to do their part in its making. They study facts, all the facts in the diverse faculties of the mechanical sciences, physics, chemistry, mathematics, general biology, cerebral physiology, psychophysics, and in economic and political sciences. They endeavour to realize the diverse expressions of modern thought and to discern that which is in harmony with experience and that which is separated from experience. The cadres of Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy are large enough to embrace all the observable facts and our confidence in the truth is strong enough to do not doubt that this could happen.¹⁵

Mercier tasked Catholic philosophers to synthesize the facts of modern science into the neo-scholastic philosophical system. If this will be done, he believed, Catholic philosophers could succeed in shaping the modern mind.

The Leuven School represented the idea that genuine philosophical thinking was aimed at achieving synthesis, which had to bring a unity of all the knowledge. As Leon Noel, another professor of the Institute, explained, philosophy “should unite all the powers of the soul, all the information furnished by science, all the points of view revealed by partial analyses, and all the divergent reflections which some overnarrow meditations have suggested to thinkers.”¹⁶ The neo-scholastics of the Leuven School were particularly interested in epistemological problems, searching for arguments to support the ontological realism of Thomas Aquinas. For these thinkers, neo-Thomism

¹⁴ Désiré Mercier, “Modern Science and Thomistic Philosophy,” *Cardinal Mercier’s Philosophical Essays: A Study of Neo-Scholasticism*, ed. David Boileau (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 407-9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 409.

¹⁶ Leon Noel, “The Neo-Scholastic Movement in French Speaking Countries,” *Present-Day Thinkers and the New Scholasticism*, ed. John Zyburia (St. Louis, MO. and London, WC.: Herder Books, 1926), 214-49, here at: 230.

offered a holistic framework that possessed conceptual tools for the reconciliation of apparent conflicts between scientific and philosophical knowledge, examining their weak points and searching for a compromise between different schools of thought. Although Neo-Scholasticism was often regarded as a politically and intellectually conservative philosophical school by Catholic thinkers, it also, as we shall see further, opened a conceptual space to engage with the problems of political modernity for whose Lithuanian Catholics who were interested in the questions of nation-building.

1. 2. Lithuanians in Leuven

At the urge of Leo XIII, Thomistic philosophy regained its currency in Catholic universities and seminaries, giving a boost to Catholic intellectual life in Lithuania. As a consequence, Catholic philosophers opened up to other currents of philosophy, as well as to the latest advances in experimental sciences and modern culture in general. After the encyclical, under the direction of Mercier, the University of Leuven was transformed into the center of the revival of Catholic thought in Europe. The philosopher Mečislovas Reinys (1884–1953), who received his Doctoral degree at the Higher Institute of Philosophy, described the centrality of the Institute to the global spread of Neo-Scholasticism in his essay in 1913: “the scientific honor of Mercier and his institute attracted many students from all over Europe, America, and Asia. After completing their studies at the institute, those people return to their homelands and become fresheners and disseminators of the ideas that they were thought at the Institute.”¹⁷ Reinys was among the first Lithuanians studying at the Higher Institute of Philosophy, which since the late nineteenth century began attracting students from the

¹⁷ Mečislovas Reinys, “Luovain’o universitetas” [The University of Leuven], *Ateitis*, 1913, No. 5-6-7, 248-55, here at: 252.

Russian Empire. In 1910, there was already a small circle of Lithuanian students in Leuven.¹⁸ They all were Lithuanian priests, who increasingly chose to study in Belgium after 1905 when following the political reforms in the Russian Empire, it became earlier to travel abroad. Therefore, the first Lithuanian students at Leuven were priests who went to Western Europe to deepen their knowledge, and then brought the neo-scholastic philosophy to Lithuania.

There I would like to stop with the aforementioned Reinys and his close friend Pranas Kuraitis (1883–1964), whose biographies were typical to Catholic intellectuals from receiving their neo-scholastic training in the West. Born in the 1880s, they shared a peasant background, and their choice of clerical career provided them with an opportunity to receive a decent education and the prospect of a prestigious and relatively well-paid position in the Church.¹⁹ After graduating from seminaries, both of them continued their studies at the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy, which at the time was the most prestigious Catholic academic institution in the Russian Empire. Reinys and Kuraitis were course mates, spending four years studying there; both graduated from the Catholic Theological Academy in 1909, in the autumn of that year beginning their studies at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven.

To grasp better their experience of studying at the Higher Institute of Philosophy, it is necessary to briefly look at the institution from which they back there, namely the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy. During the Russian Empire, a number of Lithuanian theologians, who had completed their studies in local

¹⁸ Juozas Eretas mentioned nine Lithuanians studying at Leuven at that time: Antanas Viskanta, P. Bielskus, Simonas Šultė, A. Galdikas, Stukelis, Antanas Maliauskis, Pranas Kuraitis, Mečislovas Reinys, Ruškys, see Juozas Eretas, *Katalikai ir mokslas* [Catholics and science] (Kaunas, 1935), 160n2.

¹⁹ On these points see Vanda Zaborskaitė, *Maironis* [The biography of Maironis] (Vilnius: Vaga, 1968), chapt 1.

seminaries, went there to continue their theological studies. The Theological Academy in Sankt Petersburg was established in 1844 when by the decree of the imperial administration the Theological Academy in Vilnius was moved to Sankt Petersburg. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was the most important Catholic educational institution in the whole Russian Empire. The four years of studies at the Academy trained theology professors for the Catholic seminaries of the Russian Empire. Until the Revolution of 1917, it was an important intellectual center of Catholicism, where several theologians from Lithuania studied and taught. For example, in 1912, out of thirteen professors at the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy, five were Lithuanians.²⁰ Before the First World War, the Lithuanian professors who taught there contributed to the reception of the neo-scholastic and social Catholic thought in Lithuania both through their contributions to the Lithuanian Catholic magazines, and by educating new theology professors for Catholic seminaries. However, philosophy was given little attention during their years of study at the Academy, and its learning was based on reading neo-scholastic manuals, thus contributing to the formation of the rigid and narrow-minded neo-scholastic orthodoxy among its students. For those who went abroad after their time in Sankt Petersburg, neo-scholastic studies in Western universities opened up entirely new intellectual horizons.

In the autumn of 1909, both Reinyš and Kuraitis started their studies at the Higher Institute of Philosophy, where they were taught by the most prominent representatives of the Leuven School, including Maurice de Wulf (history of philosophy), Léon Noël

²⁰ Alfonsas Vaišvila, *Logikos mokslas Lietuvoje* [The science of logic in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1980), 46-47.

(logics, psychology), Simon Deploige (natural law), and Désiré Nys (cosmology).²¹ Studies at the Institute greatly differed from their previous experience, because the curriculum at the Saint Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy was mostly focused on theology, with philosophy delegated to a minor role. In a few years, however, both Reinys and Kuraitis successfully defended their doctoral dissertations: specializing in experimental psychology, which was part of Leuven's neo-scholastic innovations aimed at opening up Catholicism to modern thought, Reinys wrote his doctoral thesis on "Vladimir Soloviev's Theory on the Foundation of Morality" (1912), exemplifying a wider trend among Lithuanian Catholics, which we will explore further in this chapter, of writing their theses in this Russian thinker; meanwhile, Kuraitis, under the supervision of Léon Noël, a year earlier wrote his doctoral thesis on "The Theory of Knowledge of Wilhelm Wundt" (1911). Their philosophical writings represented the "progressive" Neo-Scholasticism, with them submitting to the agenda of the Leuven School to bridge scholastic thought with modern scientific advances. After the First World War, when the independent state of Lithuania was established, both of them received important institutional positions, thus shaping the Catholic intellectual culture of interwar Lithuania. Moreover, despite their numerous public commitments, both of them continued writing on the problems that they were first introduced to at Leuven: Kuraitis was interested in epistemological problems, defending the positions of ontological realism, while Reinys published articles examining the problems of psychology.

Just like their teachers prescribed, these Lithuanian intellectuals pursued the synthesis of modern science and Christian faith. The look into the views of Reinys gives an excellent idea about the worldview of a graduate of the Higher Institute of Philosophy,

²¹ For the subjects that Reinys took at the Institute see *Arkivyskupas Mečislovas Reinys* [The Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys] (Chicago, Ill: Lietuvių krikščionių demokratų sąjunga, 1977), 35.

in which the reconciliation of religion and scientific knowledge was given a central role. In his 1914 short study on Thomas Aquinas, which he wrote a few years after graduating from the Institute, Reinys presented the Angelic Doctor as the great scientist and systematizer of knowledge, who always remained in dialogue with the newest scientific advances of his day. Drawing on Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges, Maurice de Wulf, Rudolf Eucken, and Joseph Anton Endres, Reinys asserted that Aquinas' method remained valid in modern times:

What method should philosophy follow? Following Aristotle, Thomas says that experience is fundamental to the edifice of knowledge. Since philosophy must be based on the sciences of faith, the first part of philosophy's method must be induction and analysis; once this has been done, philosophy must resort to the other part of its method, namely deduction and synthesis. Only by using the inductive-deductive (analytic-synthetic) method in this way can philosophy properly consider its own questions, avoiding the danger of falling into the one-sidedness that some scholastics have not avoided by paying too little attention to the areas of cognition and observation [*pažinimo ir tēmijimo sritis*].²²

In other words, for Aquinas, in Reinys's assertion, the starting point of philosophy was the data of experimental sciences. Both scholasticism and natural sciences, Reinys explained, shared methodological commitment to observation as their starting point; philosophy, however, went further, using the knowledge derived from experimental sciences to build solid worldview: "knowledge of the natural world is highly respectable because it is the only solid foundation for further scientific constructions and a coherent worldview."²³ In short, Reinys held a view shared by the "progressive" neo-scholastics of the Leuven School that even metaphysics had to be built on the findings of the positive sciences.

²² Mečislovas Reinys [Mečislovas Reinis], "Tomas Akvinietis (jo gyvenimas, raštai ir metodas)" [Thomas Aquinas (his life, writings and method)], *Draugija*, 1914, No. 93-96, 14-39. I use the following edition: Mečislovas Reinys [Mečislovas Reinis], *Tomas Akvinietis: Jo gyvenimas, raštai ir metodas* [Thomas Aquinas: His life, writings and method] (Kaunas: S. Banaičio spaustuvė, 1916), 11.

²³ Ibid.

Those who studied at the Higher Institute of Philosophy associated Aquinas with the synthesis of all available knowledge. Reinys explained that the great scholastic thinker remained relevant to modern times: “In the face of current thought [...] Thomas remains relevant: a) as we saw, he does not resist to experimental method, b) the experimental method alone is not enough, speculation and synthesis are needed, and from time to time Aquinas is suitable here.”²⁴ In his introduction to the life and thought of Aquinas, another graduate of the Higher Institute of Philosophy, Juozapas Ruškys (1888–1946), defined scholasticism as a synthetic-scientific view that took into account all the scientific knowledge of its days.²⁵ Kuraitis, meanwhile, asserted that “[a]s the progress of nature and other sciences increases, the philosopher’s attention must also be drawn to it. Philosophy has among its tasks the one which points out the necessity of bringing all human knowledge into synthesis. This synthesis cannot be permanent; as the hypotheses, theories, and conclusions of the individual teachings change, the synthesis must also change accordingly.”²⁶ In other words, they all asserted that Thomas Aquinas’ approach of synthesizing all available knowledge remained applicable in the modern world. Neo-Scholasticism, therefore, represented the claim to the universal validity of Catholic religious commitments. By taking into account the newest scientific advances from a variety of disciplines, these Lithuanian intellectuals believed, Catholics could form a holistic worldview that was superior to secular ones.

While Lithuanian students of the Institute stressed the scientific character of Neo-Scholasticism, they were also aware of its political aspect. In 1911, writing from Leuven, Reinys suggested that science alone could not provide a coherent

²⁴ Ibid., 25.

²⁵ Juozapas Ruškys, “Tomas Akviniškis” [Thomas Aquinas], *Ateitis*, 1917, No. 6, 175-80, here at 175.

²⁶ Pranas Kuraitis, “Tomo Akviniečio reikšmė filosofijoje” [The relevance of Thomas Aquinas in philosophy], *Židinys*, 1925, No. 4, 287-98, here at: 97.

Weltanschauung, because it did not solve the riddles of the world; for this, philosophy and theology were central: “experiments investigate one part of the being; philosophy and theology are concerned with the knowledge of the other.”²⁷ Reinys claimed that only the combination of experimental sciences with philosophy and theology could provide an integral worldview, implying that only a religious worldview, and by this he meant Catholicism, was coherent. At the same time, these thinkers presented the Catholic Church as an institution that contributed to the growth of the sciences, not as an opponent of them. In other words, neo-scholastic philosophy armed Lithuanian Catholic thinkers with tools to respond to positivist attacks on religion, which became particularly important when defending the Christian faith against the socialist and liberal currents within the Lithuanian national movement.

For Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, Neo-Scholasticism offered a way of reconciliation of the national project and Catholic emphasis on the return to the spiritual values to the center of modern society. Interested in the advances of natural sciences, these Lithuanian “progressive” neo-scholastics modernized Catholicism, being confident in Christianity’s propensity to lead the modern world: “it is fitting for Christianity to be the voice [*išreiškėja*] and determinant of the supreme goal of the Idea in human life.”²⁸ Tellingly, the Lithuanian students of the University of Leuven, with Reinys and Kuraitis among them, founded there a “national [and] scientific” (*tautinė mokslinė*) student society *Lithuania*, whose statutes stressed the need to be prepared for national work in Lithuania: its members “will strive to know the spirit, psychology, feelings, way of life, customs and language of the nation; would investigate the development of the life of the homeland and its obstacles; living far

²⁷ Mečislovas Reinys, “Pasaulėžvalgos įgijimo kelias” [The way of attaining a worldview], *Ateitis*, 1911, No. 3, 83-7, here at: 85.

²⁸ Mečislovas Reinys, “Kultūros darbas Lietuvoje ir ateitininkai” [The work of culture in Lithuania and the members of the *Ateitis*] *Ateitis*, No. 9-12, 346-52, here at: 350.

from the homeland, they will strive to feel what Lithuanians feel, and to understand the affairs of the Lithuanian people. The members of the Society, united with the fatherland, will look for remedies in science and in the life of foreigners for the ills of the fatherland, means for the education and upliftment of its body and spirit.”²⁹ Interestingly, the philosopher Nys was also present at the opening ceremony of this Society in 1909, consecrating its banner in the church and giving a speech.³⁰ Notably, from this society of Leuven students later grew the largest Catholic youth organization of interwar Lithuania, the *Ateitis* [Future]; not coincidentally, the date of the first meeting of the *Lithuania* board in Leuven on February 19, 1910, is officially considered by the *Ateitis* movement to be the date of its foundation.³¹

1. 3. The Question of National Vocation Emerges in Lithuanian Catholicism

Although before the First World War the neo-scholastics of the Leuven School had a significant influence on the younger generation of Lithuanian intellectuals, the origins of philosophy of culture in Lithuania can be traced back to the writings of Aleksandras Dambrauskas (1860–1938), who often wrote under the pseudonym Adomas Jakštas. Dambrauskas was a Catholic priest who possessed a wide range of talents, balancing his enthusiasm for the latest scientific advances with amateurism. He produced a wide-ranging oeuvre as a theologian, philosopher, mathematician, and linguist, as well as a poet, writer, and art critic. As the most influential Lithuanian Catholic intellectual

²⁹ Algimantas Katilius, “Lietuvių studentų katalikų draugijos Leveno universitete XX a. pradžioje” [Lithuanian Catholic students’ associations at the University of Leuven at the beginning of the 20th century], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*, vol. 34 (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2011), 141-167, here at: 142-3.

³⁰ Mečislovas Reinys, “Prof. D. Nys (1859–1927),” *Židinys*, 1927, No. 9, 154-6.

³¹ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ateities draugai: Ateitininkų istorija (iki 1940 m.)* [The friends of future: The history of the *Ateitis* movement until 1940] (Vilnius: Naujasis Židinys-Aidai, 2010), 97.

in the period before the First World War, Dambrauskas insisted that national culture had to be grounded in Catholicism, a belief of which he gave a more abstract form in his philosophical writings on the relationship between culture and religion.³² His attempts to find the proper relationship between the two make him a precursor of the philosophy of culture that emerged in interwar Lithuania.

Despite being the key Catholic intellectual at the time and earning the trust of local ecclesiastical authorities, Dambrauskas's views, as we shall soon see, were not conventional among contemporary Lithuanian Catholic thinkers. This can be attributed to his atypical academic trajectory, which contributed to his unique perspective on Christianity. Prior to becoming a priest, Dambrauskas briefly studied mathematics at the University of St. Petersburg; although he did not complete his studies, this experience expanded his intellectual horizons beyond conventional cannon of Catholic thought. He later studied at the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy from 1884 to 1888, and in 1902 he returned there as a professor of Church history and Patristics.

In his thinking, Dambrauskas blended Catholic theology with the non-Catholic thinkers that shared his adherence to commitment to religion and rejected positivist and materialist trends that were popular in Russian universities at that time. At the University of St. Petersburg, Dambrauskas, at the time only twenty years old, attended philosophy lectures by the renowned Russian thinker Vladimir Soloviev in 1880-1881, which left a great impression on him. Dambrauskas later explained that to study his writings up close. He later explained that the study of Soloviev's writings strengthened his Christian belief. Dambrauskas wrote of Solovyov: "His writings have

³² Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 32.

enlightened me on the main issues of religion and Christian life. I can, therefore, say that no Catholic apologist, no other Christian philosopher has given my spirit as much light as Vl[adimir] Soloviev.”³³ Dambrauskas also drew on the Polish philosopher Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński, and he became an expert in his philosophy, even writing an extensive article on Hoene-Wroński for the authoritative ecclesiastical encyclopedia *Encyclopedia Kościelna*, published in Polish.³⁴

It is important to note that Dambrauskas expressed the tendency, common among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers of the time, to consider Soloviev a particularly important Christian thinker. Dambrauskas considered both Soloviev and Hoene-Wroński superior to any other philosopher in the history of Western thought, including Aquinas:

There are only a small number of genuine broadminded thinkers. They include Aristotle, Plato, [and] St. Augustine among the ancient thinkers, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, [and] Leibniz among the later ones, and Hoene-Wronski and Solovyov among the newer ones. The latter two in particular are worthy of the knowledge of every one of our intelligentsia, because, drawing on all their predecessors, they present a Christian outlook on the world which is so broad and so superb [*aukštas*] that a solution of almost all the most important questions can be found in it.³⁵

Dambrauskas found in Soloviev and Hoene-Wroński a valuable resource in combating against schools of thought. He believed that their philosophical systems represented the pinnacle of human thought, capable of reconciling Christianity and the modern world. Despite his un-orthodox position, Dambrauskas remained aligned with the neo-

³³ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Aleksandras Dambrauskas-Jakštas], “Vl. S. Solovjovas (1853-1900)” [Vladimir Soloviev, 1853-1900], *Užgesę žiburiai: Biografijų ir nekrologų rinkinys*, ed. Jonas Tumas (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1930), 365.

³⁴ Aleksandras Dambrauskas, [Aleksander Dąbrowski] “Hoene-Wroński,” *Encyclopedia Kościelna*, vol. 32, ed. Michał Nowodworski (Płock: 1913), 301-30. Later, the translator of Hoene-Wroński’s writings Józef Jankowski referred to this Dambrauskas’s article in his introduction to Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński, *List do papieża o naglącej potrzebie obecnej spełnienia religji* [Letter to the Popes on the urgency of the present need for religious fulfilment] (Warszawa: M. Arct, 1928), v-viii.

³⁵ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Aleksandras Dambrauskas-Jakštas], „Du didžiausiu slavų filosofu – Vl. Solovjovas ir J. M. Hoene-Wronskis“ [Two Greatest Slavic Philosophers: Soloviev and Hoene-Wroński], *Užgesę žiburiai: Biografijų ir nekrologų rinkinys*, ed. Jonas Tumas (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1930), 423n1.

scholastic movement, at least insofar as he repeatedly stressed the compatibility between scientific progress and religious truths.³⁶

Like Soloviev, Dambrauskas was convinced that “integral knowledge” was a tool for pursuing the active transformation of the world and the moral improvement of man that alone could reveal the full religious-philosophical truth for humanity. The human mind must not be satisfied with just one aspect of the truth; those who absolutize either the religious, philosophical, or scientific aspect cannot see the whole. This absolute truth, Dambrauskas asserted, could be achieved through the synthesis of religion, philosophy, and science. This is how he described his view in 1936, but it was also his view thirty years earlier: “my teacher Vladimir Soloviev recommended integral knowledge. By this name, he called the deeper synthesis of positive theology, rational philosophy, and experimental natural science.”³⁷ Dambrauskas never explained how such “integral knowledge” could be achieved, although this was the aim that he declared in his numerous writings. In practice, however, this idea of All-Unity that he borrowed from Soloviev served Dambrauskas to defend his Christian faith against the attacks of the liberal and socialist intelligentsia.³⁸

³⁶ Some scholars suggested that such view was rooted in Dambrauskas’s adherence to Soloviev: “One of the most important ideas that Jakštas cherished and promoted was the idea of the communion of religion and science. He dreamt of a broad synthesis of knowledge of the whole of humanity, which would take place in the future and would include religion and theology, philosophy and science. In this respect, Jakštas’s [e.g., Dambrauskas’s – V. K.] ‘integral knowledge’ ideal coincides with Soloviev’s model of ‘integral knowledge.’ Almost It is certain that this lifelong idea of Jakštas was inspired by V[ladimir] Soloviev.” For this view see Arvydas Šliogeris, “Tomistines ir V. Solovjovo idėjos A. Dambrausko-Jakšto filosofijoje” [The Thomistic and Soloviev’s ideas in the philosophy of Dambrauskas-Jakštas], *Problemos* 12 (2) (1973): 69-78, here at: 71.

³⁷ Aleksandras Dambrauskas, “A. Jakšto žodis” [The word of Jakštas], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1936, No. 10, 218.

³⁸ Arvydas Šliogeris pointed out a contradiction inherent in Dambrauskas writings, coming to conclusion that the idea of synthesis of religion, science, and philosophy served only to support religious claims: “the philosopher tried to protect religion from science where science was dangerous to it, and to support religion with the arguments of natural science where this could be done without violating the rules of elementary logic,” see Arvydas Šliogeris, “Tomistines ir V. Solovjovo idėjos A. Dambrausko-Jakšto filosofijoje” [The Thomistic and Soloviev’s ideas in the philosophy of Dambrauskas-Jakštas], *Problemos* 12 (2) (1973): 69-78, here at: 74.

Before the First World War, no Lithuanian Catholic intellectual was more vocal in public debates than Dambrauskas. In 1907, after four years teaching in Sankt Petersburg, he came back to Kaunas, having been appointed by the ecclesiastical authorities to the position of the Chief Editor of several newly launched Catholic monthlies in Lithuania, including *Draugija* (*The Community*), which before the First World War became the main platform for Lithuanian Catholics to discuss cultural and social issues. It was Dambrauskas's *Draugija* that published some of the first essays in Lithuanian on Neo-Scholasticism and Social Catholicism.³⁹ This position allowed Dambrauskas to rise to prominence as an influential cultural and literary critic, shaping the Catholic understanding of the Lithuanian national project. Thus, even without being an academic philosopher, Dambrauskas was an important thinker who influenced an entire generation of Lithuanian Catholic intelligentsia. In the pages of *Draugija* Dambrauskas argued that the Lithuanians had to find their national vocation: “by recognizing our historical mission to say our own word for humanity, we do not want to preach for Lithuanian messianism or to raise our nation above others. We only claim that just like other nations, Russians, Poles, Germans, and French, have their own historical vocations, we, Lithuanians, have our historical vocation as well.”⁴⁰

In the context of emerging vibrant public sphere in Lithuania, Dambrauskas developed the concept of man as a “little creator” (*mažasis kūrėjas*).⁴¹ Inspired by Hoene-Wroński's ideas, he coined this concept with clearly expressed religious meaning, using it to counter positivist tendencies. He explained the relevance of the Polish

³⁹ For the emergence of public sphere in Lithuania after 1905 see Arūnas Streikus, “Laisvosios sklaidos galimybių laikotarpis (1905-1940)” [The period of free expression, 1905-1940], *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje istorija*, ed. Vytautas Ališauskas (Vilnius: Aidai, 2006), 391-3.

⁴⁰ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Adomas Jakštas], “Faktai ir principai” [Facts and principles], *Draugija*, 1911, No. 50, 173.

⁴¹ Interpreting Dambrauskas's concept of “little creator” I partly draw on Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 31-7.

thinker by stressing his view on man: “Wronski’s view of man as the finisher of God’s work on earth, as the living image of God the Creator, as God’s co-worker, is, in our opinion, deserving of special attention, especially since various philosophers, like [Ernst] Haeckel, do not hesitate to proclaim in books and in the university cathedrals that man is to be considered no other way than as a ‘rein zoologisch,’ that is to say, as a descendent of an ape.”⁴² For Dambrauskas, man was primarily an active and creative being, and his creativity was the essential characteristic that distinguished him from animals. He asserted that man’s creativity was the work of divine nature and that in creating culture, man was God’s collaborator. “The resemblance to God that distinguishes man from the animals is manifested first and foremost in the *power of creation* inherent in man. God, the Creator of all things, wanted man, his image, to become a *little creator*, to invent and create new things for himself and then to complete God’s work of creation on earth.”⁴³ Dambrauskas contrasted his concept of the “little creator” with Aquinas’ concept of man as a rational animal, asserting that man’s creativity was more important than his ability to reason. Man, on the other hand, was capable of knowing the eternal laws, finding them in reality, and following in creative activity: “A family, a society, a state, have strength in themselves insofar as they adhere to the eternal laws of Logos. The same applies to science, poetry, and art. The scientist, the poet, and the artist are not fully autonomous, because they have not only rights but also obligations in the field of creation. Their first duty is to observe the laws of the Logos, which are specific to these creative fields.”⁴⁴

⁴² As cited in Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 35.

⁴³ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Adomas Jakštas], *Mokslas ir tikėjimas: Populiarių apologiškų straipsnių rinkinys* [Science and faith: A collection of popular apologetic articles] (Kaunas: Žinijos bendrovė, 1930), 61-2.

⁴⁴ As quoted in Juozas Ambrazevičius [Juozas Braizaitis], “Aleksandras Dambrauskas – Adomas Jakštas,” *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Alina Skrupskelienė and Česlovas Grincevičius (Chicago: Į Laisvę fondas lietuviškai kultūrai ugdyti, 1980), 307-25, here at: 320-1.

This concept of the “little creator” reflected Dambrauskas’s cultural conservatism, and he relied on it when attacking modernist aesthetics during the interwar period; on the other hand, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Dambrauskas was an important figure in the attempts to give Lithuanian Catholicism a modern form, and in the pages of *Draugija* he encouraged the Lithuanian intelligentsia to take up creative work, emphasizing creativity as the fundamental condition of national existence.⁴⁵ Dambrauskas explained: “What [...] we have said about man is even truer for the individual nation. If it does not create anything, it will have to disappear, because there is no life in it anymore.”⁴⁶ Dambrauskas was the first Lithuanian Catholic intellectual to raise questions about the uniqueness and historical purpose of Lithuanian nation: “I do not doubt the depth of Lithuanian national creativity. But it is not possible, in my opinion, to determine its characteristics without first solving the question of the Lithuanian historical vocation. Only after we have found and clearly understood what mission we must carry out in our history, can we guess which measures we will have to take for that purpose.”⁴⁷

Dambrauskas brought up the issue of Lithuanian national specificity, but did not fully conceptualize it. This task fell to Stasys Šalkauskis (1886–1942), a young thinker with whom Dambrauskas corresponded since 1913. Šalkauskis came from a bilingual family of the urban intelligentsia, which spoke both Polish and Lithuanian, from Šiauliai, a provincial town in Lithuania, becoming one of the most important Catholic thinkers in interwar Lithuania.⁴⁸ At the time of the start of their correspondence, the young Šalkauskis had recently graduated the Faculty of Law at the University of

⁴⁵ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 198.

⁴⁶ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Adomas Jakštas], *Meno kūrybos problemos* [Problems of artistic creation] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1931), 43.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 327.

⁴⁸ For Šalkauskis’s family background and his youth years see Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (Brooklyn, NY: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 3-18.

Moscow, where he studied law, and was working in a commerce bank in Samarkand, a city in Central Asia that was then a part of the Russian Empire.⁴⁹ In the following years, took over Dambrauskas's raised questions about national specificity, following them to developing a vision of Lithuanian historical vocation. Writing a few decades later, Šalkauskis will explain that "*the vocation of a nation is its inclination to certain tasks, which derive from its innate characteristics.*"⁵⁰ However, at the time when he began correspondence with Dambrauskas, Šalkauskis was more interested in religious questions. The relationship between Šalkauskis and Dambrauskas, which we will follow further, sheds light on the intellectual horizons of Lithuanian Catholicism at the beginning of the twentieth century, and how it developed in the following decades.

Their acquaintance began when Šalkauskis published his first philosophical attempts in Dambrauskas's magazine *Draugija*. Appearing in 1913-1914, these essays entitled "The Church and Culture" revealed the strong influence of Soloviev on his thinking.⁵¹ At the time, Šalkauskis's thought was permeated with a belief characteristic to Russian religious philosophy that the divine pervades the natural world, and through the appearance of Christ, God and man have become united; only in later years, he would adopt a Neo-Scholastic division between the natural and the supernatural. In these highly esoteric essays from 1913 and 1914, the young Šalkauskis painted an apocalyptic vision of history that had to end with a cosmic catastrophe. He articulated the same views clearer in a letter from April 1918: "The truth of the apocalypse, which has always had enough power in me, now consciously rules my mind, and

⁴⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Atsakymas prof. dr. Pranui Dovydaičiui, pritaikytas jo 50 metų sukakties progai (1886-XII.2-1936)" [Reply to Prof. Dr. Pranas Dovydaitis, adapted for his 50th anniversary], *Ateitis*, 1936, No. 12, 474-81, here at: 478.

⁵⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas* [Lithuanian nation and its education] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1933), 118.

⁵¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Bažnyčia ir kultūra" [The church and culture], *Draugija*, 1913, No. 83, 257-63; Stasys Šalkauskis, "Bažnyčia ir kultūra" [The church and culture], *Draugija*, 1913, No. 84, 360-72; Stasys Šalkauskis, "Bažnyčia ir kultūra" [The church and culture], *Draugija*, 1913, No. 86, 160-80; Stasys Šalkauskis, "Bažnyčia ir kultūra" [The church and culture], *Draugija*, 1914, No. 87, 266-82.

therefore by its light I now measure all the manifestations of life. [...] My formula is quite simple. Its essence can be explained in a few words. Here they are: in the natural order, evil prevails, and in the supernatural order, good prevails, but the order of eternity overcomes the natural world of ours through its catastrophic destruction. What happened in the body of Christ individually must happen in the history of humanity universally through His Church, for only then will the sacrifice of redemption find its universal fulfillment.”⁵²

More significant than Šalkauskis’s first essays was his correspondence with Dambrauskas, which began when the young intellectual sent his first essay to *Draugija*. Initially, Šalkauskis asked the editor to remove, at his discretion, any parts of the text may conflict with Christian dogmatics. This correspondence, which began in 1913 and continued intermittently until 1920, was centered on topics important to both Soloviev enthusiasts, gradually growing into their reflections on the meaning and purpose of history. These letters are important for us because in them Dambrauskas further explained his views on Christian philosophy, not only reiterating his sympathy for Solovyov, but also articulating his dissatisfaction with Thomism, and presenting his envisioned alternative to Neo-Scholasticism.

In his letters to Šalkauskis, Dambrauskas argued that Soloviev was a superior thinker to Thomas Aquinas because the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor only represented the state of knowledge of his age. Despite the attempt by Leo XIII to revive Aquinas, Dambrauskas perceived Thomism as outdated, asserting that Catholic thinking needed new grounding. He claimed that “the ideal Christian philosophy would be that

⁵² Stasys Šalkauskis to Juozas Tumas, 16 April 1918, “Studento S. Šalkauskio laiškai kunigui J. Tumui” [Letters from the student Šalkauskis to the priest Tumas], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Mintis: Vilnius, 1993), 426-7.

which would be able to bring the old Thomism into harmonious synthesis with the new Slavic (Wroński's and Soloviev's) philosophy."⁵³ According to Dambrauskas,

Thomism is a philosophy of "cel'nago znanii" [integral knowledge], but not of the 20th century, only of the 13th century. The Catholic Church, as it seems to me, adheres to it purely *ex necessitate*, because it has nothing better, and is almost completely ignorant of the philosophy of Soloviev. Moreover, the most recent scholasticism itself looks at everything from the *fixed point of view*, [and] takes everything *in esse*, whereas today it seems to have become sufficiently clear that no philosophy of "cel'nago znanija" [integral knowledge] is possible, by rejecting the principle of *creative evolution*, by not recognizing the cosmogonic, geogonic, biological and historical processes, which make it clear that the supreme law of the cosmos [*tvarinijos*] is *panta rei*, everything *in fieri*, nothing *in esse*.⁵⁴

Presenting the ideal of "integral knowledge," Dambrauskas believed that the thought of Soloviev and Hoene-Wroński could renew Catholic thinking and start a new period in the history of Christianity. He saw their thought as a modernizing factor that could update the *philosophia perennis*, which, according to Dambrauskas, contained outdated metaphysical assumptions about static cosmic order and, therefore, was incapable of integrating the results of modern science into a synthesis. Dambrauskas recognized dynamism as the fundamental aspect of reality; this dynamism, he suggested, was captured in the philosophical systems of both Soloviev and Hoene-Wroński. This view indicated Dambrauskas's distance from Neo-Scholasticism, despite the official position of the Catholic Church. However, Dambrauskas never publicly attacked Aquinas, and on the surface, his writings seemed compatible with neo-scholastic positions, which led even his contemporaries to make different conclusions about the proximity of his philosophical views to the prevailing neo-scholastic orthodoxy.⁵⁵

⁵³ Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, 17 February 1914, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), "Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas" [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 376.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 375

⁵⁵ Scholars who had analysed Dambrauskas's writings during the interwar period and who knew him personally already at that time disagreed about his relationship with Neo-Scholasticism. Some, like Izidorius Tamošaitis, argued that Dambrauskas was "an intellectualist *par excellence*, like Aristotle and

Dambrauskas exemplified a version of modern Catholicism that was critical of neo-scholastic thought and looked for alternative intellectual resources. His modern outlook was confirmed by the fact that Dambrauskas co-authored the first program of the Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party, around 1905 writing it together with two fellow Lithuanian professors from the Sankt Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy.⁵⁶ Although no Catholic party emerged as its direct result, the program demonstrated Dambrauskas's willingness to engage with the problems of political modernity and his persistent engagement with the questions of Lithuanian national identity. However, while Soloviev was rather popular among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers at that time, Dambrauskas's vision inspired by Hoene-Wroński and Soloviev was not followed by other Lithuanian Catholic thinkers.

In response to Dambrauskas's reflections on the necessity of renewing Christian philosophy, Šalkauskis formulated the idea of a special role that Lithuanian culture could play in the renewal of Christian thought. In a letter from Samarkand to Kaunas in March 1914, he wrote:

It seemed to me that the geographical and historical position of Lithuanians prepared them for the right task to combine Western and Eastern knowledge in a synthesis. Being squeezed between the Poles, the bearers of the Western element, and the Russians, the bearers of the Eastern element, and having appropriated that element of common human culture, the Lithuanians would be able to create an organic synthesis of the two in their own national nature and thus to serve the whole of mankind with honor. There is very little impartiality, generally speaking, both in the West and in the East, so the Lithuanians who are standing on the sidelines would be more likely to achieve the synthesis than anyone else, and here, too, fate itself is forcing the appropriation of both cultural trends, otherwise, there is the danger of total collapse. It seems to me that what I have thought about this many times comes very close to what You wrote in your last letter, because, of course, in this Lithuanian synthesis there

Thomas Aquinas," while others, such as Antanas Maceina asserted that for Dambrauskas, Thomism "was, and remained, a mere outer garment, hiding a philosophy of a completely different kind."

Izidorius Tamošaitis, "Adomas Jakštas - Aleksandras Dambrauskas," *Vairas*, 1930, No. 10, 7; Antanas Maceina, "Jakšto filosofija" [The philosophy of Jakštas], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1938, No. 11, 267.

⁵⁶ Arvydas Gaidys, "Lietuvių krikščionių demokratų partijos kūrimosi aplinkybės, 1905-1907" [The circumstances of the formation of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party, 1905-1907], *Lietuvos atgimimo studijos*, vol. 3 (Vilnius: Žaltvykslė, 1991), 139-72.

would be a catholicization of Soloviev and, conversely, a solovievization of Christian philosophy ([but] not of Catholicism!).⁵⁷

In other words, Šalkauskis formulated an idea that Lithuanians can make the synthesis of Soloviev and neo-scholastic philosophy into their historical vocation. This idea, which emerged in the context of the discussion on the renewal of religion, Šalkauskis developed into a concept of Lithuanian national vocation in the upcoming years, emphasizing this idea of Lithuania's special geographical situation and the cultural particularity that it entailed. This idea became immensely important in Šalkauskis's later philosophical reflections, which we will discuss further. Another important aspect of the correspondence between Dambrauskas and Šalkauskis letters was their aspiration to provide a theoretical justification for the culture grounded in the Christian faith, which was characteristic of the entire Lithuanian Catholic intellectual tradition of the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Writing to Dambrauskas from Samarkand, Šalkauskis was convinced of the necessity of a reconciliation between Christianity and modern culture: "In our age of sorrow, surely the Church can provide an unconditional defense of culture, and on the other hand, surely, with the help of culture, a new wave of Christianity can rise, which will give birth to the flowers of the immortal truth, the good and the wellbeing."⁵⁹

In the following years, undoubtedly influenced by his discussions with Dambrauskas, Šalkauskis conceptualized Lithuanian national individuality in his first book, *On the Boundary of Two Worlds*, which was written in 1917 but published only in 1919. To better understand this book, we will look further into the circumstances of its writing.

⁵⁷ Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, 10 March 1914, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), "Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas" [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 378.

⁵⁸ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 25.

⁵⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, 10 March 1914, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), "Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas" [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 378.

Further, we will follow Šalkauskis's period in Switzerland, where he moved to deepen his knowledge of philosophy. Enrolled into the Faculty of Letters of the University of Fribourg, Šalkauskis entered the milieu of neo-scholastic philosophy, a milieu that until then, like in the case of the aforementioned Reinys and Kuraitis, had been little known to him. During these years in Fribourg, Šalkauskis began to further emphasize the dualism between religion and culture, an important development in his thinking that allowed him to analyze culture as a phenomenon important in its own right. Therefore, a look into this period of Šalkauskis's life will allow us to understand the main characteristics of philosophy of culture that was influential among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers during the interwar period.

1. 4. Šalkauskis in Fribourg

Dissatisfied with his work and unwilling to continue his career as a lawyer, Šalkauskis decided to travel to the West to study philosophy. He saw philosophy as a way of strengthening his Catholic worldview, already during his study time at the University of Moscow looking for alternatives to the then-popular positivist and materialist trends among the students. While living in Moscow, Šalkauskis took part in the activities of the "Religious-Philosophical Society," founded in the memory of Vladimir Soloviev, attending its lectures and meetings and learning about Russian philosophical thought.⁶⁰ Šalkauskis later wrote that it was precisely Soloviev's writings that sparked his interest in philosophy.⁶¹ In addition to this Russian thinker, at

⁶⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Atsakymas prof. dr. Pranui Dovydaičiui, pritaikytas jo 50 metų sukakties progai (1886-XII.2-1936)" [Reply to Prof. Dr. Pranas Dovydaitis, adapted for his 50th anniversary], *Ateitis*, 1936, No. 12, 474-81, here at 475.

⁶¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Vladimiras Solovjovas ir jo pasaulio sielos koncepcija" [Vladimir Soloviev and his concept of the world soul], *Logos*, 1926, No. 2, 175-214, here at: 175.

the time he was reading the books of the French essayist Ernest Hello, with a mind to deepen his religious beliefs and philosophical knowledge: “Apart from Soloviev and his successors, whom I met in Moscow in the society [...], I learned a lot from Ernest Hello. Although he was not a philosopher belonging to the school, there are so many gems of brilliant intuition hidden in his writings, which were produced by a great spirit (for example, the Polish translation of *Filozofia i ateizm*), that I always reread his writings with great admiration.”⁶²

On the eve of the First World War, Šalkauskis still felt the need to deepen his knowledge of Christian philosophy. At the time, he was living in Samarkand, and his work did not leave much time for independent study of philosophy, but his fascination with it never went away. Finally, Šalkauskis decided to leave his office in commerce bank in order to move to Western Europe, where he could study in one of the Catholic universities popular among Lithuanian students at the time, the University of Fribourg. He explained his decision in one of his letters to Dambrauskas in early 1914: “Three years have passed since I graduated from university. During this time, I have been doing a little bit of everything, but nothing different. Although I could not go any further in the study of philosophy in two and a half years, it never let me rest easy. Last summer I decided to finally enroll in a Catholic university abroad, specifically to study Christian philosophy. I have now chosen the University of Fribourg, which I will be attending next academic year. There is no longer any need to wait, and it is not even possible, as I am already turning twenty-eight.”⁶³ His first essays in the journal *Draugija* were enough to leave a good impression of Šalkauskis’s philosophical qualifications, enabling him, through the mediation of

⁶² Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, undated letter from 1914, “Kun. A. Dambrauskas, mano mokytojas ir kritikas” [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Mintis: Vilnius, 1993), 369.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 370.

Dambrauskas, to obtain a scholarship from the Lithuanian Catholic Society of America (entitled with the Lithuanian name of *Motinėlė*) to study abroad.⁶⁴ Thus, despite the ongoing war in Europe, in 1915 Šalkauskis left Samarkand for Switzerland, where he began philosophical studies at the University of Fribourg.

When Šalkauskis matriculated into it, the University of Fribourg was an internationally renowned institution of Catholic learning. Along with Rome and Leuven, it was considered one of the strongholds of neo-Thomism. The university was founded in 1889 as a response to Pope Leo XIII's call in *Aeterni Patris* for Catholics to embrace Thomist thought.⁶⁵ Established with the blessing of the Pope as a private university but financed by the state, the university immediately became the premier center of contemporary neo-scholastic thought in the region. The teaching of philosophy was entrusted to the Dominican order, and the *Revue Thomiste*, a philosophical journal launched in 1893 by the neo-scholastics of Fribourg, further exemplified the Thomist tradition.⁶⁶ By the early twentieth century, the University of Fribourg became an attractive academic destination among Lithuanian students.⁶⁷ There, following the example of the Higher Institute of Philosophy, professors catered

⁶⁴ Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (Brooklyn, NY: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 34.

⁶⁵ Markus Wild, "Brief aus der Schweiz," *Deutsche Zeitschrift Für Philosophie* 67 (2) (2019): 282-99, here at: 289-90.

⁶⁶ Leon Noel, "The Neo-Scholastic Movement in French Speaking Countries," *Present-Day Thinkers and the New Scholasticism*, ed. John Zybura (St. Louis, MO and London, WC: Herder Books, 1926), 214-49, here at: 242.

⁶⁷ Writing in 1935, Juozas Eretas counted as many as 110 Lithuanians who studied at the University of Fribourg: "*Lithuania* occupies a prominent place among these countries [represented at the university], because, after the reaction against the materialistic currents prevailing in Russia, Lithuanian Catholics, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, began to go to Fribourg, where, because of the free living conditions, it was easy to hide from the Russian authorities. This created a traditional Lithuanian colony, through which about 110 students have passed since 1895. At first they tried to find a common platform with the Poles studying there, but later they organised themselves independently into the 'Rūta' society, later called 'Lithuania.'" Juozas Eretas, *Katalikai ir mokslas* [Catholics and science] (Kaunas: 1935), 173n1. On the importance of the University of Fribourg for the Lithuanian community in Switzerland in the first decades of the twentieth century see Monika Šipelytė, "Frūburo Universitetas ir lietuvių veiklos Šveicarijoje reikšmė XX amžiaus pradžioje" [The University of Fribourg and the Significance of Lithuanian Activities in Switzerland at the beginning of the 20th century], *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 37 (2016): 154-76.

equality to both the lay and the clerical students, allowing Šalkauskis to be among the few lay Catholic Lithuanians who studied philosophy at the Faculty of Letters.

It was during his studies in Fribourg that Šalkauskis rethought his philosophical positions, moving away from the influence of Soloviev, even though Šalkauskis conversion to Neo-Scholasticism took some time. The historians of philosophy have turned their attention to the importance of the Fribourg period for the development of Šalkauskis's thought, arguing that it marked a substantial change in Šalkauskis's philosophical views.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, not many of his writings from this period have survived, but what does exist in his manuscripts is quite revealing of Šalkauskis's thinking. Šalkauskis's first essays, written in Fribourg, revealed his doubts about the usefulness of Neo-Scholasticism. In a paper entitled "Faith and Scholastic Philosophy," delivered at a seminar in 1917, he wrote: "Listening to a course in scholastic philosophy, I had the impression [...] that scholasticism does not provide a synthesis of faith and reason. Sometimes it seems to me that in fear of mystical subjectivism, scholasticism is too vulnerable to abstract intellectualism. And at the same time, a fusion with faith without a broad gnoseological basis makes faith too dogmatic."⁶⁹ Considering Soloviev as his philosophical authority, at that time Šalkauskis still believed that only the philosophy of All-Unity that this Russian philosopher proposed could make such a synthesis.⁷⁰ Evidently, at the beginning of his studies, Šalkauskis did not find Neo-Scholasticism attractive enough.

⁶⁸ Juozas Girnius, "Šalkauskio asmuo, darbai ir poveikis" [Šalkauskis's person, works and influence], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 11-9; Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 51.

⁶⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Tikėjimas ir scholastinė filosofija" [Faith and scholastic philosophy], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 159-62.

⁷⁰ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 272.

There is no doubt that his studies in Fribourg left a deep mark on Šalkauskis's intellectual biography and were formative for his later philosophical tastes. The study program at the Faculty of Letters consisted of a series of courses relating to cultural history broadly defined, including courses on the history of philosophy, which were blended with Neo-Scholasticism. The examination of Šalkauskis's surviving notes from Fribourg period shows that at that time Šalkauskis mostly read prominent neo-scholastics of the Leuven School, including Desiré Mercier, Desiré Nys and Maurice de Wulf, and the French Dominican Thomist Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges.⁷¹ At the same time, a crucial influence on Šalkauskas's thinking was his lively contact with one of his professors, the Belgian Dominican Marc de Munnynck (1871–1945), who taught him a course on natural philosophy and philosophical anthropology.⁷² It was de Munnynck who later became Šalkauskis's thesis supervisor.

At the time of Šalkauskis's arrival to Fribourg, de Munnynck was an “ordinary” professor at the Faculty of Letters. He was a typical product of the Leuven School of Neo-Scholasticism. Having received his education in Leuven, where he studied natural sciences at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in addition to his philosophy studies at the Higher Institute of Philosophy, de Munnynck represented Mercier's “progressive” Neo-Scholasticism. Seeking a philosophical synthesis, de Munnynck believed that philosophy had to integrate knowledge from the experimental sciences, him asserting that “[p]hilosophy is either synthesis or it is not a philosophy.”⁷³ When Šalkauskis entered the University of Fribourg, de Munnynck was already a well-known scholar in neo-scholastic circles, having published in prominent neo-scholastic

⁷¹ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 273.

⁷² Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (Brooklyn, NY: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 55.

⁷³ Marc de Munnynck, “La culture générale à l'université (Conférence),” *Bulletin Joseph Lotte* 3 (1931-32): 360-77, here at: 374.

journals of the time, including the *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Theologiques*, the *Divus Thomas*, the *Revue Thomiste*, and the *Revue Néo-Scholastique*.⁷⁴ On top of all this, he was also a great teacher, leaving a deep impression on his students through his lectures and mentoring. Šalkauskis did not leave any comments about his dissertation supervisor, but another former student referred to de Munnynck as the embodiment of neo-scholastic synthesis: “All of Fr. de Munnynck’s spiritual strength and seriousness, nevertheless, is mixed in his incredibly great synthetic power of the mind. It is here that the whole value and essence of his extremely rich personality is revealed. The philosophy of Aristotle and St. Thomas has become his philosophy and his worldview; when convinced, on the other hand, that an issue that is not available to either Aristotle or St. Thomas yet asserted by a philosopher of perhaps a different school and contrary [*odmiennych*] to his [own] beliefs, is of value and importance for the whole of human thought, he does not hesitate to accept it.”⁷⁵

Being interested in Soloviev, Šalkauskis chose to study this Russian thinker in his doctoral thesis. In this thesis, supervised by de Munnynck, Šalkauskis examined Soloviev’s conception of the world soul to show the advantages of this philosopher, as long as his philosophy did not contradict the teachings of the Church. As he stated in his letter to Dambrauskas, Šalkauskis hoped that on this topic he would “succeed in showing this new thing to the scholastics of Fribourg in defense of Soloviev’s conception.”⁷⁶ However, in the course of his writing, he came to quite the opposite conclusion to what he had hoped for, highlighting the advantages of Thomism over

⁷⁴ For the overview of de Munnynck’s oeuvre see Paul Wyser, “P. Marc de Munnynck OP: In Memoriam,” *Divus Thomas* 23 (1945): 121-34.

⁷⁵ Hipolit Legawicz, “Marc de Munnynck – filozof scholastyki odrodzonej” [Marc de Munnynck – the philosopher of the revived scholasticism], *Prqd*, 1936, No. 6, 269-76, here at: 272.

⁷⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, 9 July 1919, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), “Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas” [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 403.

Soloviev's philosophy. In his analysis, Šalkauskis concluded that Soloviev's conception was born out of confusion because the Russian thinker failed to recognize the autonomy of human reason: "What is the world soul if not an attachment to some mystical vision? Carried away by his [Oriental] tendencies, he failed to differentiate between the psychological and the metaphysical, and fell into the illusion so familiar to the Orientals."⁷⁷ The last paragraph of Šalkauskis's thesis was telling in this respect, illustrating the young intellectual's newfound confidence in Neo-Scholasticism:

We believe that we have conducted our critique of Soloviev's doctrine in the spirit of Thomistic philosophy and have thus addressed, in a particular case, the deficiency that the ignorance of scholastic thought has brought to the latter, an ignorance that has led to so many disastrous consequences in modern thought. We are convinced that if a new, broader, and deeper philosophical synthesis is possible nowadays, it must take as its basis and starting point the synthesis that was achieved in the Middle Ages in the Thomistic work. Soloviev did not do this and thereby failed to achieve his goal. To acknowledge the defects of his system is to pay the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas the tribute it deserves.⁷⁸

This ending of the dissertation signaled a turning point in Šalkauskis's thinking, him accepting Neo-Scholasticism as the philosophical system that was the most capable of solving the problems of modern life. In writing his dissertation, Šalkauskis drew on the neo-scholastic Sertillanges' two-volume *Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (1910), noting that it was this book that became his guide to the system of the "great medieval philosopher."⁷⁹ After finishing *L'Ame du Monde dans la Philosophie de Vladimir Soloviev* (*The Soul of the World in the Philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev*), Šalkauskis was disenchanted with the ideas of the Russian thinker. Šalkauskis's change of heart symbolized a greater intellectual event in the history of Lithuanian Catholicism – Šalkauskis's turn towards Thomas Aquinas indicated the waning of Soloviev's

⁷⁷ Stasys Šalkauskis, *L'ame du monde dans la philosophie de Vladimir Soloviev* (Berlin: Knospe & Dane, 1920), 119.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 120-1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

influence on Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals, which had been felt before the First World War, and the change of their intellectual horizons, marked by a greater synchronization of Lithuanian Catholicism with the new trends of European Catholicism.

The statements about the superiority of Thomas Aquinas that Šalkauskis made in his thesis were not mere lip service that the young Lithuanian intellectual made in an attempt to please his teachers in Fribourg but must be interpreted as a genuine expression of his changed mind. In 1919, in the letters to Dambrauskas written after the thesis submission, Šalkauskis explained that at the end of the dissertation's writing process "I have realized the simply infinite power of Aquinas' logic: from that time I tend to think that Thomistic philosophy is the greatest miracle of the human mind."⁸⁰ Having reached these conclusions, he placed himself among the neo-scholastic philosophers: "I now openly write myself in the ranks of its adepts."⁸¹ During these years at Fribourg, Šalkauskis became a firm believer in Neo-Scholasticism as the only philosophical school that was capable of dealing with the challenges of the modern world. Therefore, Šalkauskis came back to Lithuania believing that Neo-Scholasticism provided the best intellectual resources for the project of modern Lithuanian culture. In one of his first articles, he explained that "the synthetic philosophy that has already won the name *philosophia perennis* is the best one to lay the foundation for our work as a guideline for progress. [...] At this point I dare only to affirm that the use of it for the needs of our national culture is a proper task for Lithuanian philosophers."⁸² Thus,

⁸⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, 9 July 1919, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), "Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas" [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 403.

⁸¹ Stasys Šalkauskis to Aleksandras Dambrauskas, 2 January 1920, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), "Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas" [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 411.

⁸² Stasys Šalkauskis, "Filosofija ir mūsų gyvenimas" [Philosophy and our life], *Logos*, (1921) No. 1-2, 18-26, here at: 26.

the correspondence between the two thinkers grew into a quarrel over the philosophical backbone of modern Catholicism. Šalkauskis moved away from Dambrauskas's position that Soloviev's philosophy was the most suitable intellectual framework for modern Catholics, which the latter repeated in his letters.

It is no coincidence that from 1919 onwards Dambrauskas's letters to Šalkauskis show a noticeable estrangement. Šalkauskis's conversion to the Thomistic movement and his harsh criticism of Soloviev's philosophy also affected his relations with Dambrauskas, who regretted Šalkauskis's position. Dambrauskas wrote to his younger colleague: "In the aforementioned issue of the *Revue Néo-Scolastique* I found an important confession by the editors: 'Ayons la persuasion que nous ne sommes pas seuls en possession de la vérité, et que la vérité que nous possédons n'est pas la vérité entière.' I have regarded scholasticism in this way since I was young, and therefore I do not regard it as an expression of absolute truth. So, I would advise you to carefully review again those scholastic statements which have led you to reject Soloviev's 'world soul.'"⁸³ His reaction to Šalkauskis's changed mind was best revealed in the review that Dambrauskas wrote to the young thinker's doctoral thesis *L'Ame du Monde dans la Philosophie de Vladimir Soloviev*, which in 1920 was published as a book. In response to Šalkauskis's criticism of Soloviev, Dambrauskas suggested that Soloviev's philosophy did not contradict Thomas Aquinas, writing: "But if the author thinks that the creator of a future wider and more profound philosophical synthesis can just pass by without looking at Soloviev's philosophical synthesis, then, in our opinion, he is seriously mistaken. For in no other Western philosopher of the present

⁸³ Aleksandras Dambrauskas to Stasys Šalkauskis, 15 December 1919, Stasys Šalkauskis (ed.), "Kun. A. Dambrauskas – mano mokytojas ir kritikas" [Fr. Dambrauskas: My teacher and critic], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 409.

age will Dr. Šalkauskis find such Christian elements, such nobility of thought, and such a lively engagement with the questions of life as in Soloviev.”⁸⁴

Despite Dambrauskas’s evident dissatisfaction with neo-scholastic thought and his advice to Šalkauskis to rethink his philosophical commitments, it became the dominant philosophical school in interwar Lithuanian philosophy. Not only Šalkauskis, but many other students educated in the neo-scholastic spirit at the universities of Leuven and Fribourg came back to Lithuania, receiving influential positions in various institutional frameworks, including the University of Kaunas. Thus, by the early 1920s, for Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, Neo-Scholasticism represented a modern Catholic response to political modernity.

Šalkauskis’s case was indicative of a wider trend among Lithuanian Catholics of his generation. Among the Lithuanian Catholic students of the time, who were doing their doctoral theses in the West, Soloviev was quite a popular author. Apart from Šalkauskis, whom we have discussed in this section, and Reinys, about whom we wrote a little earlier, a whole range of other Lithuanian Catholics chose this Russian philosopher as the subject of their dissertations: Izidorius Tamošaitis (1889-1943) wrote his thesis on “The Criteriology of Vladimir Soloviev” (1920), Leonas Bistras (1890-1971) on “The Justification of Goodness, or the Moral Philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev” (1921), Vincas Mykolaitis (1893-1967) on “The Aesthetics of Vladimir Soloviev” (1922), Kazimieras Ambrozaitis (1892-1957) on “The State Theory of Vladimir Soloviev” (1925).⁸⁵ This is a clear indication that at the beginning of the twentieth century Lithuanian Catholicism was influenced by Russian Orthodoxy and

⁸⁴ Aleksandras Dambrauskas, [Adomas Jakštas], “Dr. Stasys Šalkauskis, *L'ame du monde dans la philosophie de Vladimir Soloviev*” [Review], *Draugija*, 1921, No. 3-4, 156-8, here at: 157.

⁸⁵ The point was first noted by Juozas Eretas: “Of the many dissertations written later in Fribourg, I should mention in particular those that shed light on Soloviev, who was interesting to the Western world from all angles, but until then hardly accessible [...]” See Juozas Eretas, *Katalikai ir mokslas* [Catholics and science], (Kaunas: 1935), 173n2.

religious thought, and the universities of Leuven and Fribourg played a key role in exporting Neo-Scholasticism to Lithuania through their graduate students and transforming Lithuanian intellectual culture.

The period of 1916-1920, when Šalkauskis studied at the University of Fribourg, marked a substantial change in his philosophical views. Šalkauskis returned to Lithuania with the foundations of neo-scholastic philosophy, which he never questioned later. His work was based on an Aristotelian-Thomistic conceptual apparatus, for example, as we shall see, using the four Aristotelian causes to analyze culture. On the other hand, Šalkauskis never took a serious interest in historical studies of medieval philosophy, nor did he write a single article on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Neither did he write anything about ontological or epistemological problems, which, for example, were of particular interest to Kuraitis, instead developing a discipline of philosophy of culture, which was hardly characteristic of Neo-Scholasticism at all. This can be explained by his attention to the practical branches of philosophy; therefore, in addition to philosophy of culture, he was also interested in philosophical pedagogy, as we shall see later, developing a certain ethno-pedagogical project aimed at the education of the nation. It was Šalkauskis who became the most prominent Catholic intellectual of his generation, and who also brought up a whole new generation of Catholic intellectuals under its influence. However, before we go to Lithuania, we have to look at Šalkauskis's first book, which he wrote while still in Switzerland.

1. 5. Šalkauskis and the Invention of Lithuanian National Vocation

Šalkauskis's Fribourg period was important for the entire intellectual history of interwar Lithuania because it was during this time that Šalkauskis constructed a vision of Lithuanian national identity. In the interwar period, this conceptualization offered Lithuanian intellectuals one of the most important interpretive frameworks for understanding the history of their nation and for thinking about the prospects of Lithuanian culture. The whole generation of intellectuals who grew up under the influence of Šalkauskis has been thinking about the relationship of Lithuanian national culture to modernity based on the ideas of Šalkauskis, which he first formulated while in Fribourg. The importance of these ideas requires a close look at the origins of his first book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds* (*Sur les Confins de Deux Mondes*, 1919), in which Šalkauskis presented his concept of Lithuanian national individuality and its historical vocation.

So far we have focused mainly on Šalkauskis's intellectual life, but it is equally important to look at his activities in the Swiss Lithuanian community. The influence that Šalkauskis received from Soloviev and the neo-scholastic studies in Fribourg is well-known to historians; however, the political context has been completely overlooked by previous scholars of Šalkauskis's thought, leaving them with no understanding of why Šalkauskis began to think about Lithuanian national individuality in the first place. It is important to point out that during the First World War Switzerland, where Šalkauskis was based, had become an important center of Lithuanian political activities. In addition to his studies at the university, Šalkauskis was involved in the activities of Lithuanian emigres who sought to establish an

independent Lithuanian state.⁸⁶ When he arrived in Switzerland at the end of 1915, Šalkauskis divided his time between Fribourg, where his university was located, and Bern and Lausanne, which were important centers of Lithuanian emigration in Switzerland.⁸⁷ The Lithuanian Information Bureau had just opened in Lausanne, and Šalkauskis became an associate of this organization. Originally founded in Paris in 1911 and financed largely by Lithuanian emigres in the United States, the Bureau became one of the key organizations of Lithuanian political activism during the war, aimed at shaping foreign opinion.⁸⁸ For some time Šalkauskis was both studying neo-scholastic thought at the university and working with Lithuanian émigré organizations in Switzerland; only in late 1916 did he sideline his other activities and began focusing mostly on his studies.⁸⁹

Šalkauskis's reflections on Lithuanian history and its national individuality were closely linked to the realities of international politics. In 1916, Šalkauskis, like other Lithuanian conservative thinkers at the time, was still in favor of Lithuania's greater autonomy within the Russian Empire.⁹⁰ However, in the following years, the situation had changed completely: with the outbreak of the revolution in Russia and the political turmoil that it unleashed, such a prospect seemed much less credible in

⁸⁶ Raimundas Lopata, "Lietuvių politinių centrų sąveika, 1915-1916 metais" [The interaction of Lithuanian political centres, 1915-1916], *Lietuvos atgimimo studijos*, vol. 3 (Vilnius: Žaltvykslė, 1991), 253-70.

⁸⁷ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Mano gyvenimo eiga" [The course of my life], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2012), 243-4.

⁸⁸ Alfred Erich Senn, *The Great Powers, Lithuania, and the Vilna Question, 1920-1928* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 8-9; Monika Šipelytė, *Šveicarijos lietuvių politinė ir diplomatinė veikla 1915–1919 m. Lietuvos valstybingumo klausimu* [The political and diplomatic activities of the Swiss Lithuanians in 1915-1919 on the question of Lithuanian statehood] (Doctoral dissertation: Vilnius University, 2019), 44-8.

⁸⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis to Kazys Šalkauskis, 22 December 1916, Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2012), 420-2.

⁹⁰ Monika Šipelytė, *Šveicarijos lietuvių politinė ir diplomatinė veikla 1915–1919 m. Lietuvos valstybingumo klausimu* [The political and diplomatic activities of the Swiss Lithuanians in 1915-1919 on the question of Lithuanian statehood] (Doctoral dissertation: Vilnius University, 2019), 76.

1917.⁹¹ As the war progressed, the talk of national self-determination proliferated in diplomatic circles and was now used not only by Lenin, Woodrow Wilson, and Matthias Erzberger but also, in 1918, even by the papal diplomats, all sides having different visions of the future international order in Europe.⁹² It is this context that is important in trying to understand the circumstances of the opening of Šalkauskis's first book.

With the diplomats of the warring sides discussing the postwar peace settlement, the newly emerging Lithuanian political elites were interested in promoting the Lithuanian cause, thus, launching an international campaign to introduce Lithuania to Western diplomats and politicians as a historical nation, which resulted in publications on Lithuania, with German and French as their two main languages.⁹³ A good example of such publication was a book written by the young Swiss Joseph Ehret (1896–1984), who, after meeting Lithuanian students at the University of Fribourg, joined their efforts, after the First World War even moving to Lithuania and changing his name to Juozas Eretas and becoming a close associate of Šalkauskis. Entitled *Lithuania in the Past, Present, and Future* (1919), his book was published simultaneously both in French and German editions.⁹⁴ Given these circumstances, it becomes clear that Šalkauskis's first book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds* was intended as part of this campaign and its publication was financed by the Lithuanian Information Bureau. As Šalkauskis explained in the preface, “[t]here is a gap in the

⁹¹ Jörd Leonhard, *Pandora's Box: A History of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 611-5.

⁹² Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 34-44.

⁹³ For more on the activities of the Lithuanian Information Bureau in Switzerland see Monika Šipelytė, *Šveicarijos lietuvių politinė ir diplomatinė veikla 1915–1919 m. Lietuvos valstybingumo klausimu* [The political and diplomatic activities of the Swiss Lithuanians in 1915-1919 on the question of Lithuanian statehood] (Doctoral dissertation: Vilnius University, 2019), 121-49.

⁹⁴ Juozas Eretas [Joseph Ehret], *Litauen in Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Bern: A. Francke, 1919); Juozas Eretas [Joseph Ehret], *La Lituanie. Passé – Présent – Avenir* (Genève and Paris: Atar, 1919).

international literature that this book may help to fill.”⁹⁵ The book grew out of the ideas Šalkauskis had first articulated in his presentation entitled “The Lithuanian National Idea,” which he gave twice to the Lithuanian students in Fribourg in December 1916. A year later, in December 1917, the book was already finished, but it took until 1919 for it to be finally published. Written in French and published in Geneva, originally it was intended for the consumption of international audiences, however, in the following decades, ideas first formulated in this book shaped the worldview of an entire generation of Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, even if the book itself was not translated into Lithuanian.

When writing his book, Šalkauskis was inspired by the ideas taken from his supervisor de Munynck, who, after the outbreak of the First World War, was also thinking about similar things. One Lithuanian student of de Munynck later recalled that the professor “was interested in the Lithuanian nation, [and] he used to talk about the great contribution of small nations to human culture.”⁹⁶ When Šalkauskis discussed his ideas about the renewal of religious thought with Dambrauskas, his supervisor was facing the realities of war. In his essay *Psychologie du Patriotisme* (1914), written reacting against German militarism in the face of the First World War, de Munynck articulated the idea that Belgium’s role was to synthesize the Romance and Germanic cultures while remaining neutral towards its neighboring countries politically. Thinking about the political situation of Belgium, de Munynck pointed to Switzerland, which was “particularly advantageous in this respect: a glorious history, common interests and dangers, and wise decentralization ensure cohesion and prevent dangerous conflicts;” its example has proved, he argued, that “the diversity of

⁹⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Sur les confins de deux mondes: Essai synthétique sur le problème de la civilisation nationale en Lituanie* (Genève: Atar, 1919), 8.

⁹⁶ Vincas Mykolaitis [Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas], *Literatūros etiudai* [Literary etudes] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1937), 1-2.

languages is not an insurmountable obstacle to national unity.”⁹⁷ For de Munnynck, Switzerland showed that a country locked in between Germany and France could retain its national individuality. Even more, de Munnynck asserted, ethnically diverse countries (“mixed countries”) were crucial for the political stability in the continent, which could reconcile differences between the great powers: “for the immediate contact of two immense countries, representing rival cultures, must be a source of great irritation. Mixed countries, thus become an element of peace.”⁹⁸ Being a “mixed country,” he asserted, Belgium could balance between its more powerful neighbors while retaining its individuality: “these countries are, by their very nature, called upon to the synthesis of two civilizations and to produce the fusion of the two [civilizational] ideals.”⁹⁹ De Munnynck suggested that for the Belgians this situation as the intermediary between France and Germany and a synthesizer of their cultures could even become a source of patriotism. Moreover, this synthesis was the ideal, de Munnynck’s analysis implied, that allowed the Flemings and Walloons to accommodate their regional uniqueness to the loyalty to the Belgian state.

Just like de Munnynck, Šalkauskis was reacting against the German hegemonic ambitions in Europe. In 1919, reflecting on the war that has just ended, Šalkauskis alluded to the international political situation at the time of writing the book: “It was at that time of the world war when Prussian imperialism seemed to prevail and threatened the freedom of peoples. The author, however, never ceased to hope for a better future and to believe in the victory of the idea of international justice based on the right of peoples to self-determination. Since then, the situation has been completely reversed. The author’s ideas now found not only theoretical justification

⁹⁷ Marc de Munnynck, *Psychologie du patriotisme* (Fribourg: Fagnière, 1914), 34.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

but also real support in the authority of President W[oodrow] Wilson.”¹⁰⁰ During the war, between 1915 and 1918, Lithuanian territories were occupied by the German military administration, which subordinated its local population to ruthless economic exploitation under the highly centralized Ober Ost administrative regime.¹⁰¹ Lithuanian émigré politicians, gathered together in Lausanne in the summer of 1916, harshly criticized the German policies in the occupied territories, with the young Šalkauskis present among the participants.¹⁰²

The behavior of the German military administration in Lithuania had discredited German culture in the eyes of at least some Lithuanian intellectuals, with Catholic thinkers in particular now associating it with militarism and the materialist tendencies of modernity. The ardent support by leading German intellectuals to the country’s military efforts could only strengthen this negative perception of German culture among Lithuanian elite.¹⁰³ For example, Vincas Mykolaitis (1893-1967), who studied together with Šalkauskis in Fribourg, after the war said the following about Germany: “The world catastrophe has shown that the Germanic culture, which was characterized, as it seemed, by its iron durability, has too little spiritual content, too little humanity, too little living dexterity, for us to be able to rely on it for the creation of the future of our nation.”¹⁰⁴ Surviving letters from this period clearly show Šalkauskis’s negative attitude towards Germans, and he complained that they hindered

¹⁰⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Sur les confins de deux mondes: Essai synthétique sur le problème de la civilisation nationale en Lituanie* (Genève: Atar, 1919), 10-1.

¹⁰¹ Jörd Leonhard, *Pandora’s Box: A History of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 255-9.

¹⁰² Raimundas Lopata, “Lietuvių politinių centrų sąveika, 1915-1916 metais” [The interaction of Lithuanian political centres, 1915-1916], *Lietuvos atgimimo studijos*, vol. 3 (Vilnius: Žaltvykslė, 1991), 253-70, here at: 262.

¹⁰³ For the “intellectual mobilisation” among German philosophers, see Ulrich Sieg, *Geist und Gewalt: Deutsche Philosophen zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2013), 103-50.

¹⁰⁴ Vincas Mykolaitis [Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas], “Friburgiečiai Paryžiuje [The students from Fribourg in Paris], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 10, ed. Vanda Zaborskaitė (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2007), 243-57, here at: 243.

the Lithuanian cause.¹⁰⁵ This was even though Matthias Erzberger, the leader of the German Catholic Centre Party and a graduate of the University of Fribourg, established working relations with Lithuanian political elites, including those based in Switzerland.¹⁰⁶ Despite these contacts, as Šalkauskis rightly noted, most of the German political elites did not envision Germany's eastern neighbors as independent nations, projecting them as future client states linked to the German Empire. In late 1917, at the time when Šalkauskis was finishing his book, the German authorities pressured the Lithuanian *Taryba* to declare “a firm and permanent alliance with Germany,” which would include the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Lithuania with a Catholic dynasty from Germany as well as currency and customs union.¹⁰⁷

Involved in the activities of the Lithuanian émigré community in Switzerland, Šalkauskis was looking for ways to promote the Lithuanian national movement abroad. De Munynck's *Psychologie du Patriotisme* undoubtedly became an important source of inspiration for Šalkauskas, who found in his supervisor's writings the same idea of the mediation of small cultures between large ones, expressed in the same conceptual language of synthesis, however, this time uttered by a neo-scholastic philosopher. Reading *Psychologie du Patriotisme* through the lenses of his earlier belief that Lithuanians can contribute to the synthesis of Soloviev and neo-scholastic philosophy by introducing the West to the ideas of this Russian thinker, Šalkauskas found in de Munynck's essay a confirmation that cultural synthesis was the

¹⁰⁵ See for instance Stasys Šalkauskis to Juozas Tumas, 16 April 1918, “Studento S. Šalkauskio laiškas kunigui J. Tumui” [Letters from the student Šalkauskis to the priest Tumas], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Mintis: Vilnius, 1993), 425-32.

¹⁰⁶ Alfonsas Eidintas, *Antanas Smetona and His Lithuania: From the National Liberation Movement to an Authoritarian Regime (1893-1940)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 77-9.

¹⁰⁷ Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2019), 36. On German foreign policy towards Lithuania see especially Raimundas Lopata, *Lietuvos valstybingumo raida 1914-1918 metais* [The development of Lithuanian statehood, 1914-1918] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996).

prerogative of small nations. Thus, Šalkauskis turned de Munynck's argument about the special "frontier mentality" of small nations into an argument about synthesis as a national vocation. Šalkauskis acknowledged his indebtedness to de Munynck writing: "We have the good fortune to be able to affirm that such a synthesis is feasible in principle, by relying on the authoritative opinion of Father M[arc] de Munynck, who considers that the national role of Belgium is to synthesize the Romance and Germanic cultures."¹⁰⁸ Šalkauskis read de Munynck's suggestion primarily as a formula for Lithuanians to find their own national vocation, believing that his home country was another instance of "mixed country." In this way, inspired by de Munynck, Šalkauskis turned his earlier idea, expressed in his exchange with Dambrauskas, about Lithuanian contribution to the renewal of religious thought into a vision of Lithuanian national individuality.

In his book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds*, Šalkauskis envisioned a Lithuanian national individuality that was based on the idea of cultural synthesis. It is not for nothing that the subtitle of the book was "Synthetic Essay on the Problem of National Civilization." This vision was well described by the quote of the French essayist Ernst Hello, which had been chosen to decorate the cover of the book: "The East and the West separated both long for each other." Inspired by the French orientalist writings of Hello and Joseph de Maistre, which pictured the active and energetic West that draw on reason vis-à-vis the sleepy East that relied on feelings and intuition, Šalkauskis suggested that the most important characteristic of Lithuanians was their ability to appropriate different cultural influences and spiritual elements, integrating

¹⁰⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Sur les confins de deux mondes: Essai synthétique sur le problème de la civilisation nationale en Lituanie* (Genève: Atar, 1919), 234.

them into their own national culture.¹⁰⁹ Belonging neither to the East, nor the West, Lithuania was able to absorb the spiritual and cultural elements of both sides: “the problem of national civilization in Lithuania is nothing other than the harmonization of the opposite, but never contradictory, tendencies of the East and the West.”¹¹⁰ In looking at the history of Lithuania, Šalkauskis distinguished three periods: in the first period, which ended with the Union of Lublin (1569) and the establishment of the common Polish-Lithuanian state, its national culture was dominated by eastern elements; in the second period, the culture of Lithuania was dominated by western elements; and with the National Revival in the late nineteenth century, the third period of Lithuanian history began. The book, therefore, consisted of three chapters, “thesis,” “antithesis” and “synthesis,” which corresponded to these three periods of Lithuanian history. Although this tripartite structure may seem overly schematic, the opposite was true: in his book, Šalkauskis creatively reinterpreted the facts of Lithuania’s history, highlighting the expressions of the national spirit in its cultural and political development to produce a larger argument about the present tasks of the Lithuanian national project.

By giving Lithuanian cultural history a philosophical content, Šalkauskis set modern Lithuania the task of assimilating the cultural achievements of its neighbors. The Lithuanian national vocation, Šalkauskis argued, was the synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures; it was tasked to originally incorporate valuable elements of these cultures into Lithuanian culture. Historical experience showed, Šalkauskis argued, that

¹⁰⁹ For a perceptive analysis of Šalkauskis’s idea of cultural synthesis see Nerija Putnaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų tremtiniai: Lietuviškosios tapatybės paieškos ir Europos vizijos XX a.* [The Exiles of Northern Athens: The search for Lithuanian identity and visions of Europe in the 20th century] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2004); Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 330-48.

¹¹⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Sur les confins de deux mondes: Essai synthétique sur le problème de la civilisation nationale en Lituanie* (Genève: Atar, 1919), 41.

one-sided cultural influences, both from the East and the West, had negative political consequences.

To live and prosper, the Lithuanian people must achieve a balance between East and West in their politics and civilization, and history shows that they have been able to overcome the difficulties of their situation to the very extent that this condition has been met. On the other hand, the exclusive predominance of first the East and then the West brought into its life an ever-increasing number of destructive agents, so much so that it lost its existence as a state. The Lithuanian revival was above all a reaction against the abusive preponderance of both Eastern and Western influences. We have already seen that the Lithuanian nation can live a full life only if it succeeds in merging Russian and Polish cultural principles into a Lithuanian national synthesis and in establishing at least a local and partial balance between the Germanic and Slavic worlds.¹¹¹

In other words, the Lithuanians had to mediate between the East and West. Šalkauskis tasked the Lithuanians to find a balance between the East and the West, integrating their different cultural elements through an organic synthesis into their own national culture. This was the historical task, Šalkauskis argued, that Lithuanians had to achieve. Only in this way, Lithuanians could develop modern national culture, and balance between different national cultures and the great political powers. “To achieve in its civilization the synthesis of two worlds, or rather of two halves of the world, is a noble mission for a nation and an ideal worthy of all efforts and sacrifices. The recognition of this ideal must be the greatest pride of the Lithuanian people; it must characterize its physiognomy in the eyes of the civilized world and morally force the latter to recognize its inviolable national rights.”¹¹² This is how Šalkauskis developed the idea that he first articulated in his letter to Dambraskas about the special position of Lithuania that allowed it to participate in the renewal of religious thought by helping to synthesize Soloviev and Neo-Scholasticism. Drawing on his earlier discussion and inspired by de Munynck, in his book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds* Šalkauskis “secularized” his vision, dropping out the part about religious renewal and

¹¹¹ Ibid., 233.

¹¹² Ibid., 234.

stressing that the synthesis that Lithuanians could achieve first of all corresponded to their national individuality; cultural synthesis, Šalkauskis believed, offered the way to modernize Lithuanian national project.

1. 6. Neo-Scholasticism Goes to Lithuania

After the First World War and the creation of the Lithuanian state that followed it, Kaunas, which became the capital, emerged as one of the easternmost centers of Neo-Scholasticism in Europe. Catholic intellectuals educated at the internationally renowned centers of Neo-Scholasticism in Fribourg and Leuven, returned to Lithuania, taking teaching positions both at the university and theological seminaries. The most important hub of Neo-Scholasticism was undoubtedly the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the newly founded University of Kaunas.¹¹³ The statute of the University, adopted by the votes of the Christian Democratic Party after much controversy at the Constituent Assembly in 1922, established two faculties of humanities within its confines: one was a secular Faculty of Humanities, the other one was a Catholic Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Funded by the state but acting under canon law, this faculty provided a Catholic education which was embedded in Neo-Scholasticism.¹¹⁴

The Faculty of Theology and Philosophy has become an enclave of Catholicism within the otherwise secular university, maintaining a certain autonomy with its structure; for instance, the appointments of teaching positions could be made only

¹¹³ Romanas Plečkaitis, "Filosofija VDU" [Philosophy at the University of Kaunas], *Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas: Mokslas ir visuomenė, 1922-1940* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, 2002), 160-83.

¹¹⁴ Regina Laukaitytė, "Teologijos-filosofijos mokslai" [Theological-philosophical sciences], *Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas: Mokslas ir visuomenė, 1922-1940* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, 2002), 149-50.

with the consent of the Episcopate. The Faculty of Theology and Philosophy brought together Catholic scholars from a variety of academic disciplines, with the majority of its teaching staff in its early years coming from two Catholic academic institutions, the University of Fribourg and the University of Leuven: Bistras, Eretas, Mykolaitis, Šalkauskis, all of whom we already mentioned before, as well as the theologian Ignas Česaitis (1893–1961), the historian Jonas Totoraitis (1872–1941) and the Swiss linguist Gottlieb Studerus (1899–1972) all studied at the University of Fribourg; it's another graduate the geographer Kazys Pakštas (1893–1960), who was also a close friend of Šalkauskis, joined the Faculty in the upcoming years. Meanwhile, Reinys and Kuraitis were graduates of the University of Leuven, and the sociologist Antanas Maliauskis (1877–1941) studied at both of these institutions. In the spirit of Leuven, the Faculty was attended by both laymen and students of the theological seminary who were preparing for the priestly ordination; accordingly, the organization of the Faculty was divided into two: there was a department of philosophy for laymen students and a department of theology, to which seminarians belonged. Šalkauskis was the only professor who taught all the students of the philosophy department because some of his courses were obligatory.¹¹⁵ Because of this privileged position in the curriculum of the Faculty, Šalkauskis was able to shape the worldview of a whole generation of young Catholic intelligentsia.

The Faculty of Theology-Philosophy played a central role in educating the young generation of Catholic intelligentsia, training specialists in as many as fourteen different specializations in the humanities, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, and Lithuanian studies. The students of this faculty were attracted through the Catholic youth movement *Ateitis (Future)*, which was active both at the

¹¹⁵ Juozas Girnius, “Šalkauskio asmuo, darbai ir poveikis” [Šalkauskis's person, works and influence], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 25.

university and school level: after graduating from the school, youth that was already socialized in the *Ateitis* movement was directed to the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.¹¹⁶ An important area of activity of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy was the training of primary and secondary school teachers, educating them in the Catholic spirit so that the young Catholic pedagogues could later serve in the newly established and only expanding network of primary and secondary schools, spreading Catholic worldview in the Lithuanian provinces.¹¹⁷ Incidentally, the Faculty was the home of *Lietuvos Mokykla* (*The Lithuanian School*), an academic journal devoted to pedagogical theory and research of pedagogical history, whose primary audience was schoolteachers.

The establishment of the university in Kaunas provided a platform for Šalkauskis to spread his ideas. Seeing himself as an educator of the nation, Šalkauskis had a goal of creating a new intellectual elite and providing a worldview for the nation. He decided on this while he was still in Fribourg, as his notes from that period show. Šalkauskis wrote about this in one of his letters in April 1918, suggesting that his task after coming back to Lithuania will be the creation of a philosophical synthesis capable of elevating national culture: “Considering philosophical work, or rather national education through philosophy, to be my vocation, I am used to, or am still in the process of getting used to, to search for the synthesis of truth everywhere because this is the task of every true philosophy. I look for, and I find that there are grains of truth scattered in all areas of our life. To gather them together and build a national palace of truth – that is our aim in philosophy. I believe I am called (if, of course, it is not the

¹¹⁶ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ateities draugai: ateitininkų istorija (iki 1940 m.)* [The friends of future: The history of Ateitis movement until 1940] (Vilnius: Naujasis Židinys-Aidai, 2010), 342-78.

¹¹⁷ Česlovas Mančinskas, *Aukštasis mokslas Lietuvoje 1918-1940* [Higher education in Lithuania 1918-1940] (Vilnius: LPA, 1996), 72.

fruit of pride) to work for the building of this palace.”¹¹⁸ As some of the surviving letters from the Fribourg period indicate, Šalkauskis projected onto the younger generation his expectations that were not fulfilled by his peers, with which Šalkauskis felt he could not find adequate contact. Šalkauskis wrote in a note dated September 5, 1918: “In general, the present generation is in its majority decadent, and it is difficult for me to get along with it. It does not understand me, I feel out of place among them. I hope to be able to come to an agreement with the younger generation that I will have to lead. I want to dedicate all my work to them, I want to serve them, and I expect them to trust me and to share my ideals.”¹¹⁹ When he came back to Lithuania after his studies, Šalkauskis believed it was his duty to raise a new generation of intellectuals that would become a new elite. Anticipating the importance of pedagogy in his work already in Fribourg, in addition to studying philosophy, Šalkauskis also chose to focus on pedagogy.

In the 1920s, Šalkauskis, just like he imagined before coming back to Lithuania, became a professor of philosophy at the University of Kaunas, establishing himself as one of the leading Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania. After his return to Lithuania, in 1921 Šalkauskis began to work at the so-called High Courses in Kaunas, which in the following year were reorganized into the University of Kaunas. In 1922, Šalkauskis was appointed *Dozent* with a chair in pedagogy and its history at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, in the same semester getting promoted to “extraordinary” professor, and six years later, in 1928, becoming “ordinarily” professor. During the

¹¹⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis to Juozas Tumas, 29 April 1918, “Studento S. Šalkauskio laišakai kunigui J. Tumui” [Letters from the student Šalkauskis to the priest Tumas], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Mintis: Vilnius, 1993), 434.

¹¹⁹ The fragment from his diary is dated September 5, 1918. As quoted in Juozas Girnius, “Šalkauskio asmuo, darbai ir poveikis” [Šalkauskis’s person, works and influence], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 3, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1993), 22. This entry is partly cropped in the collection of Šalkauskis’s writings, see Stasys Šalkauskis, “Studijų Fribūre laikų dienoraščio fragmentai” [Fragments of a diary from the time of studies at Fribourg], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2012), 212.

1920s Šalkauskis taught courses on the methodology of scientific work, introduction to philosophy, logic, philosophy of culture, and pedagogy. It was the 1920s that was the most productive period of his life. During this period, Šalkauskis wrote most of his books, all of which were prepared based on the courses he read: *The Elements of the General Methodology of Scientific Work* (*Bendrosios mokslinio darbo metodikos pradai*, 1926), *An Outline of Philosophy of Culture* (*Kultūros filosofijos metmenys*, 1926), *Civic Upbringing* (*Visuomeninis auklėjimas*, 1927); later, already in the 1930s, Šalkauskis published two more books based on the articles that he wrote earlier: *The Ideology of the Ateitis Movement* (*Ateitininkų ideologija*, 1933) and the *Lithuanian Nation and its Education* (*Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas*, 1933).

In his lectures, Šalkauskis asserted that neo-scholastic philosophy was superior to other systems of thought. Aristotle and Aquinas, in his view, reached the “highest peaks” of thinking that remained unmatched in the history of philosophy. Therefore, Aristotelian-Thomist philosophical system was the best intellectual framework available for the human mind:

Aristotle made a universal synthesis of Greek philosophy. Saint Thomas Aquinas, drawing on the philosophy of Aristotle, made a universal synthesis from the achievements of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In our time, Neo-Scholastic philosophy, based on the Aristotelian Thomistic system, develops further and seeks to bring together a new synthesis of the achievements of Antiquity and the Middle Ages with the achievements of modern times. This is a truly lasting philosophy, *philosophia perennis*.¹²⁰

In his lectures Šalkauskis asserted that the strength of Thomism was its capacity to solve philosophical problems by avoiding one-sidedness, combining different perspectives into one all-encompassing system.

¹²⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Filosofijos įvadas” [Introduction to Philosophy], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 107.

Having briefly discussed Šalkauskis's career in interwar Lithuania, it is worth looking at other philosophers. With the establishment of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, both Reinys and Kuraitis began to teach there, both of them making excellent careers during the interwar period. The faculty taught various courses on the history of philosophy and on epistemology (or "gnoseology," as it was called back then). In 1927, Kuraitis became an "ordinary" professor and in 1929 he was elected as the Head of the Faculty, remaining in this position until 1937. Kuraitis was the only Lithuanian philosopher who regularly attended International Thomist Congresses during the interwar period. In addition to his teaching duties, he was editor-in-chief of the official journal of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, *Tiesos Kelias* (*The Way of Truth*) from its launch in 1925 until its closure in 1940. Mostly read by the clergy, the monthly published official decrees of the Church, sermons as well as essays by Catholic intellectuals on the most pertinent issues of the day. This position cemented Kuraitis as one of the most important Catholic intellectuals in the country. He was also an important power broker at the Faculty, responsible for scholarships for students going to study abroad. Among his most important publications were *The Main Questions of Gnoseology* (*Pagrindiniai gnoseologijos klausimai*, 1930) and the two-volume *Ontology* (*Ontologija*, 1931-1933).¹²¹ Moreover, under his guidance, a group of students from the Faculty jointly translated the first neo-scholastic philosophy textbook ever to appear in Lithuanian, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1894) by the German Catholic philosopher Albert Stöckl, which was published in 1926.¹²² Reinys, meanwhile, taught and wrote on psychology, publishing a textbook based on his lectures *Psychology: General and Comparative* (*Psichologija:*

¹²¹ Pranas Kuraitis, *Pagrindiniai gnoseologijos klausimai* [The Main Questions of Gnoseology] (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Teologijos-filosofijos fakultetas, 1930); Pranas Kuraitis, *Ontologija* [Ontology], volumes 1-2 (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1931-1933).

¹²² Albert Stöckl [Albertas Stöcklis], *Filosofijos istorijos bruožai* [An outline of the history of philosophy] (Kaunas: Švietimo ministerijos Knygų leidimo komisija, 1926).

bendroji ir lyginamoji, 1931).¹²³ Eventually, however, he turned to other activities: in 1925–1926, he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of the Christian Democrats, and gradually worked his way up the ladder of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, finally becoming Archbishop in 1940 and, after the regaining of Vilnius by Lithuania, Administrator of the Vilnius Ecclesiastical Province.

The trajectory of Dambrauskas was the opposite. Belonging to a different generation than Šalkauskis, Kuraitis, and Reinys, he did not find his place that easily in independent Lithuania. Although he continued to be a prolific author, during the interwar period Dambrauskas was no longer influential on other Catholic thinkers in Lithuania. His edited journal *Draugija*, which ceased publication during the war, was relaunched in 1919, only to be discontinued once again in 1923. Differently from others, Dambrauskas did not teach at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, even if he received from it an honorary professorship. During the interwar period, Dambrauskas, although officially respected, was relegated to the periphery of Catholic intellectual life. In the 1920s, a new generation, educated in the neo-scholastic centers of the West, now shaped the agenda of Lithuanian Catholicism. This indicated both the change of generations and the change of Catholic intellectual culture in Lithuania. Dambrauskas's conservatism was particularly evident in his condemnation of modernist art, which for him was the opposite of the divine ideal: “for them, it is only a total revolution in art, a renunciation of what has been, an arrogant contempt for all that was done before, the most complete emancipation from the laws of spirit, religion, morality, and nature, a pseudo-titanism that does not look back on anything, and a complete promiscuity. Hence the sins against all reality and truthfulness – green sky, yellow water, mockery of anatomy in the drawing of bodies or figures. Such art is

¹²³ Mečislovas Reinys, *Psichologija: bendroji ir lyginamoji* [Psychology: General and comparative] (Kaunas: 1931).

not Lithuanian art.”¹²⁴ Hence, while for other Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals Neo-Scholasticism provided language that seemed useful in modern intellectual debates, Dambrauskas’s attitudes increasingly signaled a brand of cultural conservatism that largely remained alien to the major Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania.

The 1920s was the period of the golden age of neo-scholastic thought in Lithuania. Just like the neo-scholastic philosophers of Leuven and Fribourg, Lithuanian philosophers of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy launched their academic journal of philosophy, whose neo-scholastic character was evident from its name of *Logos*. Gradually, the graduates from Catholic universities in the West were given teaching positions in the seminaries, integrating the teaching of neo-scholastic philosophy into the seminary curricula, which until then had been focused solely on theology. In this way, during the interwar period, the seminaries became the structures through which neo-scholastic philosophy shaped the thinking of the new generations of Lithuanian Catholic clergy, supplementing the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy as the most important focal point of neo-scholastics in Lithuania.¹²⁵

The Faculty was the meeting place of the Lithuanian Catholic elite, where questions of social and political importance were always in sight. Throughout the interwar period, it hosted prominent Catholic intellectuals, both laymen and clergymen, some of whom were also involved in politics and linked with the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party. Its two professors, for example, the sociologist Kazimieras Šaulys (1872–1964) and the philosopher Pranas Dovydaitis (1886–1942) were among the signatories of the Independence Act of 1918; in addition, for a short time in 1919, Dovydaitis held the

¹²⁴ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Adomas Jakštas], “Lietuvių meno apžvangos paroda” [The exhibition of Lithuanian art], *Draugija*, 1920, No. 9-10, 365-6.

¹²⁵ Alfonsas Vaišvila, *Logikos mokslas Lietuvoje* [The science of logic in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1980), 37-42.

office of the Prime Minister, while both Reinys and Bistras served as ministers in the Christian Democrat governments. Not infrequently, teaching at the university overlapped with other activities, such as teaching at the Kaunas seminary, holding ecclesiastical offices, or working in newspaper editorial offices. Therefore, among its professors was the theologian Juozas Skvireckas (1873–1959), at the time bishop, who in the later years became the head of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Besides their teaching duties, the professors of the Faculty were frequent guests and lecturers in the local meetings of numerous Catholic organizations across the country.¹²⁶ The Faculty was a meeting point where important interpersonal connections were made between laymen and clergymen as well as between teachers and their students. In this atmosphere, a new generation of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals was educated.

1. 7. Šalkauskis's Philosophy of Culture

Šalkauskis inspired the development of philosophy of culture and became the main authority on this philosophical discipline in Lithuania. In the first years of the interwar period, philosophy of culture emerged as an academic discipline, and the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, where Šalkauskis taught, became the home of this philosophical discipline. The establishment of cultural philosophy in Lithuania is well illustrated by the fact that it was taught alongside other philosophical subjects in the seminaries, hence the reflections on cultural themes by Lithuanian Catholic thinkers found a fertile ground for reception among future Catholic priests.¹²⁷ In his philosophy

¹²⁶ Regina Laukaitytė, “Teologijos-filosofijos mokslai” [Theological-philosophical sciences], *Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas: Mokslas ir visuomenė, 1922-1940* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, 2002), 155-8.

¹²⁷ Alfonsas Vaišvila, *Logikos mokslas Lietuvoje* [The science of logic in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1980), 40.

of culture, Šalkauskis developed the theistic concept of culture. Culture, he asserted, “requires its own propagation and completion in the higher sphere of life, which may be religion.”¹²⁸ As exemplified by Šalkauskis, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers conceptualized a vision of a national culture based on Christian foundations. Later, reflecting on the 1920s, Vincas Mykolaitis recalled, “[a]t the end of the First World War and in the early post-war years, we idealistic young people were full of enthusiasm, high hopes, and expectations. We were haunted by all sorts of reforms, revivals, marches, and impulses. We projected movements and organizations to raise Lithuanian culture.”¹²⁹

Not interested in epistemological problems, Šalkauskis turned his attention to practical philosophy, understanding philosophy of culture as part of it. In this sense, the philosophy of culture he developed was not limited to the consideration of theoretical problems of culture, but also sought to indicate the cultural ideal to be pursued in the project of national culture. Here, Šalkauskis came close to *Lebensphilosophie*, seeking to know culture itself. At the same time, he distanced himself from methodological considerations about the conditions of historical knowledge, arguing that philosophy of culture was not concerned with these topics.¹³⁰

Šalkauskis did not produce a complete book on his philosophy of culture, but one of his students, Kazimieras Barkauskas, compiled a summary of his lectures into a book entitled *An Outline of Philosophy of Culture (Kultūros filosofijos metmens, 1926)*, which conveyed the teacher’s ideas in a compressed form. Šalkauskis himself wrote in the introduction: “Due to lack of time, the author was unable to compile a summary of

¹²⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofija” [Philosophy of culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 428.

¹²⁹ Vincas Mykolaitis [Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas], *Literatūros etiudai* [Literary etudes] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1937), 266.

¹³⁰ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 53.

his extensive notes himself.”¹³¹ This was all that Šalkauskis published on philosophy of culture between the wars, however, two additional typescripts of his lectures have survived: one entitled *Special Problems of Philosophy of Culture* (*Specialiosios kultūros filosofijos problemos*), the other was a longer version of his lecture materials entitled simply as *Philosophy of Culture* (*Kultūros filosofija*).¹³² All these surviving texts show an undeniable neo-scholastic influence on Šalkauskis’s thinking about culture. Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture expressed the aim of the reconciliation of religion and modernity, which was evident in the “progressive” versions of Neo-Scholasticism, as well as the desire for the advancement of national culture.

Taking neo-scholastic philosophy as the basis for his philosophy of culture, Šalkauskis adopted the key concepts of neo-scholastic metaphysics, applying them to the analysis of culture. As a neo-scholastic thinker, Šalkauskis applied a three-level hierarchy of being divided into nature, culture, and religion, in which culture was approached as a distinctive sphere of human life.¹³³ Moreover, Šalkauskis instrumentalized the neo-scholastic philosophical categories to develop a conceptual apparatus for the analysis of culture, drawing on Aristotelian formal causes: form, matter, agent, and purpose. Šalkauskis appropriated the principle of hylomorphism to the conceptualization of culture, asserting the dualism between inchoate matter and the form, where he stressed that culture was the formation of the natural. Therefore, Šalkauskis asserted that “*cultural activity is the conscious action of man on some natural object for the purpose of giving it a form corresponding to a higher idea.*”¹³⁴ At the same time,

¹³¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofijos metmens” [An outline of philosophy of culture], *Logos*, 1925, No. 2, 124.

¹³² Both manuscripts were included into Šalkauskis’s complete writings, see Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol 1, Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990).

¹³³ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 61-5.

¹³⁴ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofijos metmens” [An outline of philosophy of culture], *Logos*, 1925, No. 2, 129.

Šalkauskis suggested that culture was not sufficient in itself and required grounding from religion. “The purpose of culture is not the ultimate purpose of human life, [...] man must have another more profound purpose, which, being separate from it, can fully satisfy the deepest desires of the human spirit.”¹³⁵

In his explanations of European cultural history, Šalkauskis was shaped by the experiences of the First World War, which for him served as a starting point for the reflection on the foundations of culture:

Philosophy of culture is a subject of special interest in our time because the problem of culture has now become more acute than in the past. The events which have shaken our whole life and have presented us with this problem with all its severity are expressed in two words: *war and revolution*. Both the war and the revolution with which the so-called cultured world has suffered in our times and is still suffering are the direct consequences of its historical, [and] cultural development. [...] What does all this mean? Why has the progress of the most cultured nations led them to the greatest catastrophes in history? Could it be that the trend towards cultural development has been the culprit of these catastrophes, the results of which the world will not soon cease to be tormented by? [...] A whole series of questions arise in our minds if we face the fact that *the period of the greatest flowering of culture ended with the greatest catastrophes* that the world has not yet lived through to this day. This fact alone gives the problem of culture an extraordinary poignancy. The problem of culture becomes so acute precisely because with the great crisis of our times *the crisis of cultural consciousness has come*.¹³⁶

In other words, he saw a paradox in the history of European culture, because the period when the highest level of material wealth was reached had led Europe to the greatest catastrophe, the First World War. This led to the conclusion that there was something inherently flawed in European culture. It was the task of the philosophers of culture to resolve this paradox, providing a “solution” that would guarantee the development of culture without further crises.

In Šalkauskis’s philosophy, reflections on the development of culture were linked to the needs of the Lithuanian national project. Šalkauskis argued that “*the problem of*

¹³⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofija“ [Philosophy of culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 326.

¹³⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofijos metmens” [An outline of philosophy of culture], *Logos*, 1925, No. 2, 124-5.

culture is of particular relevance to Lithuania, also because the Lithuanian nation is still, so to speak, at the beginning of its national, political [*valstybinio*], and, in general, spiritual [and] cultural rebirth. This or that solution of the cultural problem, once it has taken root in our society, will turn the whole of its activity in its direction.”¹³⁷ Philosophy of culture, then, had to propose a version of modern culture that was free of negative impulses and that could be applied to the Lithuanian national project. While the preface of his 1919 book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds* Šalkauskis expressed his enthusiasm about Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, in a few years neither the American President nor Lenin appealed to Šalkauskis as symbols of new models of social and political order.

When Šalkauskis began teaching the course on philosophy of culture, the crisis of Western culture was extensively discussed across Europe, and it should be noted that in 1918 the first volume of Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* appeared. Immensely popular at the time, the book offered a bleak presentation of declining Europe as part of Spengler’s “morphological” conception of culture’s organic rise and decline.¹³⁸ Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, like their counterparts in East Central Europe, saw this moment as an opportunity for their national culture to catch up with the more advanced nations in Europe. Discussing the organicist conception of cultural development presented in Spengler’s book, Šalkauskis rejected its pessimism. He saw Spengler’s conception only as a reflection of disillusioned German consciousness that for a long time adhered to militaristic and imperialistic practices:

A very significant cultural movement is taking place today in Germany, which has emerged from the war clearly defeated by its western neighbors. The disillusionment with militarist and imperialist politics and the difficulties of life cannot but produce a

¹³⁷ Ibid., 127.

¹³⁸ H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962), 7-13.

psychological and at the same time an intellectual reaction here against the cultural trend which has settled well with the old world order and, incidentally, with the old political trend. German thought, driven by the principle of contrast [*kontrasto dėsniu vadoma*], is and increasingly and with more and more vigor will turn from west to east and look there for peace and also for a remedy for the present disasters.¹³⁹

Lithuanian Catholic thinkers perceived Western culture as a model to be emulated in the Lithuanian cultural project, however, this should be done while avoiding the negative tendencies of modernization that were present in the West. Šalkauskis's lectures on philosophy of culture weighted the problems of culture in its relation to religion, suggesting that in order to avoid a crisis in the future, European culture has to be grounded in Christianity.

At the core of Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture was the distinction between the human "person" and the human "individual." Although the specific sources of his ideas remain uncertain, it is evident that Šalkauskis drew inspiration from the Christian intellectual tradition. The "human person" was a key Thomist concept, used already by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, and revived by the twentieth-century Catholic thinkers who reinscribed it back into modern social and political thought, aligning it with their projects of social change.¹⁴⁰ As Edward Baring suggested, the distinction between the "person" and the "individual" can be traced back to the work of Max Scheler, a German philosopher who instrumentalized the term "person" to criticize Kantian ethics, which he viewed as empty and rationalistic formalism. For Scheler, the term "person" meant that humans are spiritual and communal beings embedded in a network of multiple communities, through which their individual goals were integrated into a coherent social whole.¹⁴¹ This distinction

¹³⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Kultūros filosofija" [Philosophy of Culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 160.

¹⁴⁰ Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and "Revolution," 1891–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 22-3.

¹⁴¹ Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 119-21.

was later adopted by various Catholic thinkers, including Jacques Maritain, who first employed it in his book *The Three Reformers* (1925), written under the influence of Charles Maurras and the monarchist and nationalist *Action Française*, and further developed in his seminal *Integral Humanism* (1936). Maritain instrumentalized the distinction to argue against the abstract individualism associated with liberal theory.¹⁴² Therefore, Christian personalism provided an immediate intellectual background for Šalkauskis's instrumentalization of the "person" and the "individual" in his lectures on philosophy of culture.

Šalkauskis could not have been directly influenced by Maritain, as he had already used the distinction between the "person" and the "individual" in his lectures before this distinction was adopted by Maritain. While both thinkers shared similar conceptual language and an emphasis on Catholicism as an integral worldview, it is clear that Šalkauskis drew inspiration from other sources. A more realistic source of inspiration for Šalkauskis might have been the émigré Russian Orthodox philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev, who became an important reference for Catholic thinkers who adopted this distinction between the "person" and the "individual" in the 1930s.¹⁴³ While Šalkauskis did not include references to Maritain when teaching philosophy of culture, he summarized and discussed in detail Berdyaev's philosophical views on history. In Berdyaev's usage, the "human person" was opposed to the perceived "bourgeoisization" and "proletarianization" of European culture, which was integral to his vaguely defined pursuit of social justice that some scholars described as Christian

¹⁴² Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 68.

¹⁴³ Samuel Moyn, "Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights," *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 87.

socialism.¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, Šalkauskis also drew inspiration from the works of Wilhelm Windelband, a German neo-Kantian philosopher from the Baden School. In his lectures on philosophy of culture, Šalkauskis discussed the neo-Kantian understanding of culture, including the views of Windelband and his student Heinrich Rickert, and specifically referred to Windelband's definition of the "person" from his *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1914) when explaining the situatedness of individual human beings within society and their relationship to the broader cultural history.¹⁴⁵

For Šalkauskis, the categories of the "person" and the "individual" had a clearly articulated universal character, and he avoided anti-Semitism and exclusionary paradigm that often accompanied the reception of Christian personalism in East Central Europe.¹⁴⁶ In his public pronouncements, he denounced anti-Semitism as incompatible with Christian universalism and the Lithuanian national project, remaining committed to this view even when ethnic tensions erupted in 1939 and 1940.¹⁴⁷ One of his greatest concerns, Šalkauskis wrote in his 1933 book, was "to protect the Lithuanian nation from narrow nationalism, the danger of which is quite real for us, as for other nations, in these times of zoological nationalism."¹⁴⁸ During the 1920s, in his lectures on philosophy of culture, Šalkauskis asserted that "the human person has the right to claim for himself conditions of free choice that no one can take away from him. In other words, the human person is the bearer or subject of

¹⁴⁴ Edward B. Richards and William R. Garner, "The Political Implications of Nicholas Berdyaev's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31 (1) (1970): 121-8, here at: 124-6.

¹⁴⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Kultūros filosofija" [Philosophy of Culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 210-1.

¹⁴⁶ Piotr H. Kosicki, "Masters in Their Own Home or Defenders of the Human Person?" *Modern Intellectual History* 14 (1) (2017): 99-130; Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 170-92.

¹⁴⁷ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, "Šalkauskis ir degutas Kauno gatvėse" [Šalkauskis and tar on the streets of Kaunas], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 9-10, 389-95.

¹⁴⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas* [Lithuanian nation and its education] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1933), 4.

inviolable rights; he is a moral and juridical person who cannot be regarded by other people as a mere tool, i.e., as a living instrument or a slave.”¹⁴⁹ He taught this understanding of personalism to his students, who grew into an intellectual force in Lithuanian public life in the 1930s.

Šalkauskis’s employed the distinction between the human “person” and the human “individual” to conceptualize cultural progress. According to him, the “person” was the driver of national advancement. Šalkauskis asserted that “[m]an is both the individual and the person. As the individual, he is a part of the mass, belonging to the whole. As the person, he is a free and intelligent member of society.”¹⁵⁰ Using Aristotle’s four causes, Šalkauskis described culture as the result of the human “person” shaping nature: “The efficient cause of culture is the free and conscious human person, who can complete the purposefulness of creation in nature through self-consciously pursued ends.”¹⁵¹ For Šalkauskis, this self-determination of man to follow the ideal was the guarantee of cultural progress: “as inert individuals become self-determined persons, the mass itself is transformed into a self-conscious society [*i susipratusi̇ visuomeṅ*].”¹⁵² This implied that the progress of national culture and humanity as a whole depended on the development of each “person,” and he asserted that “the cultural progress of man is causally linked to his ideological growth and development, i.e., to how this ideal-mindedness [*iḋj̇ingumas*] conquers an ever greater area in human life and activity and at the same time transforms from the psychological into the ontological.”¹⁵³ Thus, Šalkauskis formulated a vision in which

¹⁴⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofija” [Philosophy of Culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 199-200.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁵¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Specialios kultūros filosofijos problemos” [Special problems of philosophy of culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 426-7.

¹⁵² Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofija” [Philosophy of Culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 213.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 225.

individual advancement was tied to the advancement of the nation. With progress, the human “person” would become more complete and increasingly independent from the collective mass. As inert “individuals” evolved into self-determined “persons,” the mass itself would undergo transformation into an intelligent society.¹⁵⁴

Šalkauskis implied that the elite of society was made up of persons, who were the real agents of progress, while the masses created popular culture, which was the result of collective creativity. Thus, in his pedagogical writings, Šalkauskis put particular importance on the creation of a new intellectual elite that could advance national culture. He explained: “Only when the intelligentsia honestly fulfils its cultural vocation towards the people can the life of the nation be normal in the pedagogical sense, because the intelligentsia must essentially be an educative factor in the life of the nation and thus of the people.”¹⁵⁵ Lithuanians, he claimed, already had a long and honorable intellectual tradition, with Adam Mickiewicz, whose “genius is the bloom of the Lithuanian spirit,” as its prominent thinker.¹⁵⁶ In the past, however, the Lithuanian elite estranged itself from the common people, which had disastrous consequences for Lithuanian culture – instead of advancing the Lithuanian culture, Šalkauskis asserted, Lithuanian spirit showed its vitality by nurturing with its cultural genius the Polish culture: Lithuanian “intellectual evolution, of which Mickiewicz represented the last stage, helped the Poles to raise their culture to a level that they could not have reached alone.”¹⁵⁷ To develop national culture, both the intelligentsia and the people had to work together, therefore Šalkauskis tasked new intelligentsia to elevate the culture produced by the common people to the level of universal

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹⁵⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas* [Lithuanian nation and its education] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1933), 140.

¹⁵⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Sur les confins de deux mondes: Essai synthétique sur le problème de la civilisation nationale en Lituanie* (Atar: Genève), 145.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

importance. Šalkauskis thought of Lithuanian national individuality as a potential opportunity unrealized in history, trying to educate a young generation of Catholic intellectuals who would be able to connect individual, national, and common human elements in their creative work. Since the early 1920s, his goal was to create this educated segment of society that could take a lead in advancing national culture.

To raise the level of national culture, Šalkauskis specifically used a short-lived *Romuva* journal (*The Sanctuary*; in its first issue it was called *Ruomuva*), which gives us an insight into the cultural project imagined by this philosopher. It is quite telling that he chose for it the subtitle “The Journal of National Culture and Integral Life.” In the preface to the first edition, Šalkauskis explained that it aimed to reconcile cultural universalism and Lithuanian national individualism: “nationality [*tautybė*] is an individual form, to which the universal content should be appropriated, and that the two are inseparable from each other without harm to the nation and mankind.”¹⁵⁸ Although due to financial difficulties the journal ceased to exist after only two issues, Šalkauskis maintained this vision of creating national culture on Christian grounds throughout the interwar period. In his lectures and interventions to public debates, Šalkauskis’s outlined agenda of modernization was later taken up by the generation of Catholic intellectuals that grew up during the interwar period. Šalkauskis taught his course on philosophy of culture until the spring of 1935, afterward handing the course over to one of his students, Antanas Maceina, whose ideas we will discuss in greater detail in chapter 2. By that time, Šalkauskis had raised a whole generation of Catholic intellectuals who internalized the philosophical problems he was discussing and continued their teacher’s project of national culture.

¹⁵⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Įkurtuvių pratartis” [Foreword to the first edition], *Ruomuva*, 1921, No. 1, 5.

1. 8. Conclusions

In the early twentieth century, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers often combined influences of Russian religious thought and Neo-Scholasticism, them being particularly interested in Soloviev's philosophy. Šalkauskis and Dambrauskas embraced Soloviev's philosophy of All-Unity (the synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy) as a modern Christian worldview. This changed with Lithuanian students going to study in Western Europe, some of them becoming the leading representatives of Lithuanian Catholicism after the First World War. Despite their differences they all shared an orientation towards a synthesis of knowledge, a feature that allowed Soloviev's influence to persist alongside Neo-Scholasticism, despite the institutional support that the Church provided for the latter.

The discussion between Dambrauskas and Šalkauskis exemplified an important shift in Lithuanian Catholic intellectual culture towards Neo-Scholasticism accompanied by the simultaneous diminishing of the influence of Russian Orthodoxy on Lithuanian Catholicism during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It shows that the language of synthesis smoothened the transition of Lithuanian Catholic thinkers towards Neo-Scholasticism. After the First World War, the neo-scholastic philosophy was institutionalized at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas, which became the most important hub of Catholic thinkers in interwar Lithuania.

Neo-Scholasticism provided a language for engaging with the Lithuanian national project, as Catholic thinkers contributed to national building by bridging Catholicism with Lithuanian nationalism. They envired a return to the spiritual values in modern society within the framework of national culture, reflecting a wider tendency of

Catholic intellectual life in East Central Europe. Believing that the crisis of modern culture, which resulted in the eruption of World War I, was caused by secularization, they insisted that the Lithuanian national project had to be built on Christian foundations, and the spiritual had to return into the center of interactions between men. This was particularly evident in the rise of philosophy of culture in Lithuania, which was explicitly devised as a critique of negative tendencies of modernity and aimed to reconcile religion and culture. Šalkauskis, the founding figure of this philosophical discipline in Lithuania, tasked his students to build a national culture that would be both modern and Christian, and proposed an influential vision of Lithuanian national individuality as the synthesis of the East and the West, which was later taken over by his students. Neo-Scholasticism dominated Lithuanian philosophy from the beginning of the century until the Second World War, and the intellectual life of the 1930s will be explored in the next chapter.

2. Philosophy of Culture and the Emergence of the Young Catholic Generation

The end of the 1920s and the early 1930s marked a moment when a new generation of Catholic intellectuals entered the forefront of cultural and intellectual life in Kaunas. Sometimes called the Young Catholics or the Generation of 1936 these intellectuals were a diverse group consisting mostly of Catholic laymen educated in philosophy, literary studies, history, and sociology.¹ As I show in this chapter, despite their differences they had in common three important features. Firstly, they all shared admiration for Šalkauskis, whose ideas they appropriated and interpreted in new ways. Secondly, an important boost for their thinking came from abroad. They lived and studied in Western Europe and in many respects acted as the transmitters of new intellectual trends in Lithuania. Therefore, in their writings, the young generation of Catholic intellectuals blended the ideas of their teacher with the influences of Western Europe. Thirdly, just like their teacher, the Young Catholics chose the sphere of culture as their primary field of action, rejecting the logic of party politics. As cultural critics, they pointed out the perceived weaknesses of Lithuanian social and cultural life, often looking for alternate ways for Lithuanian modernization. They were keenly aware of the challenges facing their generation, including the persistence of secularism and the growing influence of both radical right and radical left in European politics.

¹ Leonidas Donskis, *Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism and Social Criticism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 11-32; Juozas Eretas, *Dvi generacijos mūsų krikščioniškosios kultūros tarnyboje: nuo 'Tėvynės sargo' įsteigimo (1896) iki 'Naujosios Romuvos' įkūrimo (1931)* [Two generations in our Christian cultural service: From the founding of *Tėvynės Sargas* (1896) to the founding of *Naujoji Romuva* (1931)] (Roma: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1972); Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ignas Skrupskelis: Asmenybė ir laikmetis* [Ignas Skrupskelis: Personality and times] (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014).

To understand the impact of Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture on the young generation of Catholic intellectuals, one must explore the careers and study paths of some of Šalkauskis's most gifted students. For this reason, this chapter follows three prominent Catholic intellectuals, who one after another came back from their studies abroad and rose into prominence as the leading Catholic intellectuals: Juozas Keliuotis (in 1929), Pranas Dielininkaitis (in 1933), and Antanas Maceina (in 1935). Each of them, in their own way, engaged with the ideas first developed by their teacher. The intellectual trajectories of these intellectuals resembled the path of the whole generation of Catholics. Moreover, in this chapter, I will give special attention to the philosophy of culture advocated by Maceina, the most prominent Lithuanian philosopher of his generation and the disciple of Šalkauskis. Inspired by the ideas of their teacher, by the mid-1930s the Young Catholics became the leading voices of Catholicism.

The speed, in which the young Catholic intellectuals were trained and in which they managed to storm the intellectual life of the country, had several important causes, of which one must note the strength of their academic preparation at the university level. Because of this, we must look closely for the connection between philosophy of culture, the discipline institutionalized at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, and the worldview of the young Catholic generation. By investigating the intellectual trajectories of the representatives of the young Catholic generation, this chapter shows that Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture was supplemented by various other intellectual trends, giving new directions to Šalkauskis's project of the nation's cultural advancement.

2. 1. Šalkauskis and the New Generation

The early 1930s saw the emergence of a new generation of Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania who were motivated by a desire to revitalize Catholicism and maintain its position in the country's public life. Unlike their predecessors who focused primarily on Thomism to counter secularism, these young intellectuals drew on a broader range of intellectual influences. They read widely contemporary European thought, including the French "non-conformist" personalists, Jacques Maritain, Henri Bergson, Nicolas Berdyaev, and a variety of sociologists and legal theorists advocating for corporatist reforms. Despite their varied intellectual influences, Šalkauskis remained an important moral and intellectual influence on the new generation of Catholic intellectuals. Although many of them studied disciplines outside of philosophy and theology and were less influenced by the neo-scholastic tradition, they remained committed to the project of modernizing national culture while maintaining belief in the superiority of Catholicism over secular ideologies. They were active in a variety of social and cultural organizations, being members of Catholic student association *Ateitis*, publishing essays in journals and magazines, and debating on topics of religion and modernization of national culture. Further we will explore the ways in which Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture inspired a generation of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals to embrace universal cultural elements and criticize the current condition of society, as they sought to modernize national culture.

The young generation of Catholics in the early 1930s saw an opportunity to fill the void left by the declining influence of the older generation of Catholic politicians. This transition occurred as former Christian Democrat politicians lost their positions as the leaders of Catholic population. The coup of 1926 resulted in the *Tautininkai* party

consolidating power in Lithuania, while the Christian Democrat party subsequently imploded. In a few years, the Christian Democrat party closed its regional branches and functioned only in Kaunas, prompting many of its leading politicians, including several priests, withdraw from public life.² The steady collapse of the party was a sign of the decrease in prominence of the older generation of Catholic politicians that were active during the party's heyday. As a result, the leadership of Catholic society appeared to be up for grabs, and by the early 1930s, the younger generation of Catholics demonstrated their eagerness to act.

The Catholic institutional infrastructure established in Lithuania by the first half of the 1920s facilitated the rapid emergence of a new generation of home-grown Catholic youth. These young intellectuals were trained at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas, where they were influenced by Šalkauskis. Notable among them were Juozas Ambrazevičius (1903–1974), Pranas Dielininkaitis (1902–1942), Jonas Grinius (1902–1980), Juozas Grušas (1901–1986), Zenonas Ivinskis (1908–1971), Juozas Keliuotis (1902–1983), Antanas Maceina (1908–1987), Ignas Skrupskelis (1903–1943) and Stasys Yla (1908–1983), all of whom played important roles in the interwar cultural life of Kaunas. This was an all-male company, and the reasons for the lack of female colleagues among remains unexplored.³ Just like the previous generation, they were deeply committed to the cause of Lithuanian

² For the case of Mykolas Krupavičius see Petras Maldeikis, *Prelatas Mykolas Krupavičius* [Prelate Mykolas Krupavičius] (Roma: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1985), 211–32. For the whole Christian Democrat party see Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918–1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania (1918–1940): Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 151–2.

³ Maceina, for example, maintained that “[c]reative work [...] is more a male privilege. Although woman can do beautiful things in this sphere, the ordering of the external world, [and] the production of objective works [*objektyvinių kūrinių*] is not inherently female.” As quoted from Vytautas Kavolis, “Sąmoningumo trajektorijos” [The trajectories of consciousness], *Žmogus istorijoje* [Human in history] (Vaga: Vilnius, 1994), 156. Kavolis did not provide an original reference. For a study on the role of females in the Catholic youth organization *Ateitis*, see Indrė Čuplinskas and Jūratė Motiejūnaitė, “The Vaidilūtė: How Lithuanian Catholic Youth Made a Pagan Priestess Christian,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/01629778.2021.1990973](https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2021.1990973).

culture and saw Catholicism as closely linked to the nation's efforts to modernize. They also saw themselves as part of a broader movement of Catholic renewal, which sought to revitalize the Church and make it more relevant to contemporary society. For our purposes, it is crucial to note that after assimilating Šalkauskis's teachings on cultural synthesis, these young intellectuals sought to modernize Lithuanian society focusing on the cultural sphere as key arena for their endeavors.

The adolescence years of young Catholic intellectuals, born around 1902, coincided with the outbreak of the First World War and they were among the first-generation students of the newly founded University of Kaunas. The establishment of the university in Kaunas in 1922 was a significant development, providing opportunities for young people to pursue higher education in their own country. The establishment of the University of Kaunas was especially important for the Catholic youth who had already been socialized in Catholic circles led by their local priests and had become members of the Catholic youth association *Ateitis*.⁴ Enrolling in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the university was a natural choice for them, as it not only offered the chance to deepen their understanding of Catholic doctrine but also provided a broader education in the humanities. This combination of the newly established university and the existing network of Catholic institutions contributed significantly to the rise of Catholic laymen intellectuals in Lithuania, allowing for the development of a strong Catholic intellectual tradition. The graduates of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy became key figures shaping cultural and social life in Lithuania during the 1930s.

⁴ For the role of the Catholic youth movement *Ateitis* (The Future) in the socialization of Catholic intellectuals see Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ateities draugai: ateitininkų istorija (iki 1940 m.)* [The friends of future: The History of the *Ateitis* movement until 1940] (Vilnius: Naujasis Židinys-Aidai, 2010). For case study see Juozas Girnius's reflections on his own upbringing: Juozas Girnius, "Autobio... Skeveldros" [Autobio... Smithereens], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 1995, No. 10, 706-13. For the activities of *Ateitis* movement in schools before the First World War see Juozas Girnius, *Pranas Dovydaitis* (Chicago: Ateitis, 1975), 347-53.

After completing their undergraduate education in Kaunas, many young Catholic intellectuals continued their studies abroad. Recognized as gifted students and Catholic activists by their professors, they secured funding for doctoral studies through Catholic institutions. Directed by their professors to specific academic centers, they deepened their expertise in a particular field of interest and acquired knowledge not readily available in Lithuania. This was a deliberate strategy aimed at bringing new ideas and expertise on foreign schools of thought back to Lithuania. Students chose to study at universities in Paris, Königsberg, Munich, Strasbourg, Grenoble, Brussels, and other places. With the help of foreign professors and access to libraries with literature otherwise inaccessible at home, Lithuanian students were able to deepen their knowledge and write their doctoral dissertations. As a result, many of the main representatives of the young generation of Catholic intellectuals received their education both in Lithuania as undergraduates and pursued their advanced studies in Western universities. This approach helped to shape the intellectual tradition of Catholic laymen in Lithuania, which became less embedded in Neo-Scholasticism.

The pursuit of education among young Catholic intellectuals facilitated their social ascent, resulting in several notable individuals attaining influential positions within interwar Kaunas' cultural establishment. By the mid-1930s, a number of Šalkauskis's pupils had assumed editorial roles in key Catholic cultural publications. In 1929, Grušas was appointed the chief editor of *Mūsų Laikraštis* (*Our Newspaper*), the publication of the Centre of Catholic Action in Lithuania. Keliuotis established his cultural review, *Naujoji Romuva* (*The New Sanctuary*), in 1931, while Skrupskelis took over the editing of *Židinys* (*The Hearth*) in 1934. Additionally, in 1936, a cohort of Ambrazevičius, Dielininkaitis, Grinius, Ivinskis, Maceina, and Yla established their newspaper, *XX Amžius* (*The Twentieth Century*), leading to the closure of the

Christian Democrat outlet *Rytas* (*The Morning*). Furthermore, many of these intellectuals secured teaching positions at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Kaunas. It was apparent that a generational change was taking place within the Lithuanian Catholic elite.

The success of the young intellectuals was a testament to Šalkauskis's pedagogical vision. In preparing the new generation of Catholic intellectuals, Šalkauskis emphasized the importance of studying Christian teachings and representing one's beliefs in public. Catholics should build a strong civil society that could resist the tendencies of secularization in modern society. He saw Catholicism as the "middle way" that had to synthesize positive elements of other ideologies in light of the Christian faith. Arguing for both national progress and the preservation of European civilizational values, Šalkauskis always suggested an ideological middle way between all extremes. He described Catholic groups as "a factor of wise freedom, social balance, solidarity, and progressive evolution."⁵ Writing in 1932, he was worried about the double threat of National Socialism and communism, insisting that Catholics, in particular, "are called to play a positive role in the struggle of various forces, when the barbarians from the Right and the Left invade the confused old world, trying to establish a barbaric dominion of slavery on its ruins."⁶ The current spiritual situation in Europe demanded the Catholic youth to be adequately prepared to defend the principles of Christianity: "*The young people pursuing Catholic education must prepare themselves to become the vanguard of Catholic action,*" he stated. "For it is clear that in our times young people must be prepared for the struggle for cultural and religious values, and creative activity, otherwise the world will be overrun by

⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Vykdomojo ateitininkų vajeaus reikalu" [On the cause of *Ateitis* movement], *Ateitis*, 1932, No. 6, 283-305, here at: 286.

⁶ Ibid.

barbarians who will put an end to our civilization and open an apocalyptic period for religion.”⁷

Šalkauskis was highly regarded as both an intellectual and moral authority by the younger generation. Šalkauskis was a widely recognized intellectual figure due to his involvement in public life, and his teaching was highly regarded at the Faculty. In fact, some of the courses he taught were mandatory for all students. His reputation was so impressive that students from other faculties also attended his lectures. This influence was demonstrated in 1927 when he was voted as the new leader of the *Ateitis* Catholic youth association during their yearly conference, a position he held until 1930. Notably, his book *The Ideology of the Ateitis (Ateitininkų ideologija)*, published in 1933, was compulsory reading for members of the organization and laid out the main principles that the Catholic youth should follow.⁸ One of his students later reflected on Šalkauskis’s influence, stating that “having reached moral heights, loved by students, respected by friends, and recognized or respected by the enemies of the worldview [that he represented], for a long time he has been considered the immovable authority of cultural and spiritual life in Lithuania.”⁹ Therefore, Šalkauskis’s ideas played a significant role in shaping the minds of Lithuanian Catholic youth during the interwar period.

Šalkauskis’s ideas enjoyed widespread impact, despite the fact that only a few of his students chose to specialize in philosophy. Many of his graduates became teachers,

⁷ Ibid., 288.

⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Ateitininkų ideologija: Paskutinių laikų formavimosi vyksme* [The ideology of the *Ateitis*: In the development of recent times] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1933).

⁹ These are the words of Juozas Girnius, as quoted by Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 321. Šalkauskis's position as an intellectual authority was paradoxical. While he was highly respected by his students, his philosophical theories were often deemed too abstract, and his lectures were considered challenging to comprehend. Consequently, it is fair to suggest that Šalkauskis was widely admired but not extensively read. See Juozas Girnius in conversation with Arūnas Sverdiolas, “Laisvę turi apmokėti” [One must pay for freedom], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2015, No. 6, 7-20, here at: 7-11.

gaining a position to implement Šalkauskis's ideas about "integral" education in primary and secondary schools. Some young Catholics also became contributors to the Catholic cultural press and eventually became cultural critics. Šalkauskis's characteristic emphasis on cultural universalism and language of "synthesis," "national individuality," and "cultural advancement" were widespread among his students, substantially shaping the cultural discourse of the young generation of Catholic intellectuals. Through his teachings, Šalkauskis inspired an idealist worldview in the young Catholic generation of interwar Lithuania.¹⁰ Moreover, Šalkauskis groomed his student, Maceina, to become his successor in the fields of philosophy of culture and philosophical pedagogy, ensuring the continuity of these disciplines. However, the limited job opportunities in the academic market of interwar Lithuania, with only one university and one Catholic faculty, meant that there were virtually no teaching positions available for philosophers.¹¹ As a result, many of his students specialized in other disciplines. Nevertheless, Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture influenced their work and his teachings had a significant impact on many who turned to other academic disciplines such as sociology, literary studies, and history. Ultimately, Šalkauskis's legacy extended beyond the confines of academic philosophy, inspiring a generation of intellectuals who sought to modernize national culture.

The 1930s generation of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals differed from their predecessors in significant ways, despite the close connection between professors and

¹⁰ Juozas Ambrazevičius, "Naujosios lietuvių literatūros idėjinės ir forminės linkmės" [New ideological and formal trends in Lithuanian literature], 233-46. In *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai II*, ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937).

¹¹ For example, reflecting on his own philosophical path Juozas Girnius remembered the moment when he was awarded scholarship to continue his advanced studies of philosophy abroad: "When Catholics awarded [me] a scholarship to go abroad, Bishop Reinys told to me: 'There is no need [for educating another philosopher], there will be no work [for him in the academia]. But since there is a man, we are sending him [to study abroad].'" See Juozas Girnius in conversation with Arūnas Sverdiolas, "Laisvę turi apmokėti" [One Must Pay for Freedom], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2015, No. 6, 7-20, here at: 9.

students at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Firstly, most Catholic intellectuals in the 1910s were priests, with Catholic laymen like Šalkauskis forming the minority. However, by the 1930s, the trend had shifted, and the most important Catholic intellectuals were laymen. Secondly, the younger generation was more flexible than their predecessors in choosing their study destinations. Rather than solely attending neo-scholastic academic institutions, they often received advanced training in secular universities. While older destinations such as Leuven and Fribourg remained somewhat popular, students increasingly traveled to Germany, Austria, and France. They prioritized the expertise in a particular field that the university could offer, rather than Catholic institutions. These differences meant that the young Catholic intellectuals were much more attuned to intellectual trends outside of officially accepted Neo-Scholasticism than their predecessors who studied abroad in the early twentieth century.

The studies of the young generation of Catholic intellectuals abroad can be understood through the lens of Šalkauskis's advocacy of cultural synthesis. As discussed in chapter 1, Šalkauskis believed that national advancement could be achieved by the appropriation of universally significant cultural elements from other nations. In his national pedagogy, Šalkauskis encouraged his students to search for such elements in other nations, stating that “[n]ew generations must be determined to look for *universally significant content that best suits the individual form of nationality* [...]”¹² Šalkauskis argued that foreign cultural achievements could only be transferred to Lithuania through the mediation of individuals who would bring back good examples from abroad and apply them at home. Therefore, in part, the rise of the young Catholic generation was the result of Šalkauskis's efforts to create a new generation of

¹² Stasys Šalkauskis, *Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas* [Lithuanian nation and its education] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1933), 168.

intellectuals who embraced the principles of integral Catholicism laid out in his writings.

Šalkauskis believed that the young Catholic intellectuals had to give a modernizing impulse to the Lithuanian society. In addition to their primary task of specializing in their chosen field of studies, students were encouraged to become familiar with the culture of the country they were studying in by “critically immersing” (*kritiškai įsigyventi*) themselves in it. By comparing the culture of foreign countries with the state of Lithuanian culture, they were expected to adopt positive achievements from abroad. Šalkauskis believed that this appropriation of cultural advancements from other nations could only strengthen Lithuanian national individuality: “[...] cultural borrowing, when done deliberately, in no way overshadows national consciousness because cultural borrowing enriches the content of national individuality while leaving intact the form of national individuality; meanwhile, the richer the content of national culture, the more valuable and original the form of national individuality [...]”¹³ Therefore, Šalkauskis urged Lithuanian students who returned from abroad to “realize [...] cultural progress by combining national motives with the achievements of foreign culture.”¹⁴

In conclusion, the influence of Šalkauskis on the new generation of Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania was evident, as demonstrated by their shared commitment to the idea of cultural synthesis. Upon their return to Lithuania, these former students of Šalkauskis formed a loosely connected group of Catholic intellectuals, without giving themselves a formal name. Like their teacher, they expressed their views in newspapers and journals and focused on advancing Lithuanian national culture.

¹³ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Apie studijuojančių užsienyje Lietuvių uždavinius” [About the tasks of Lithuanians studying abroad], *Židinys*, 1927, No. 9, 175-7.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Through their social and cultural criticism, they reflected on the cultural condition of society, pointed out its flaws, and suggested possible directions for cultural advancement. Their writings often had a normative character, and, like Šalkauskis, they advocated for cultural, social, and, eventually, political changes in Lithuania. Their collective efforts would ultimately leave a lasting impact on the country's intellectual and political history. In the following case studies, we will examine more closely how Šalkauskis influenced these young Catholic intellectuals and explore their key intellectual contributions to the cultural development of Lithuania.

2. 2. Juozas Keliuotis and *Naujoji Romuva*

To study the social influence of Šalkauskis's ideas, examine the intellectual trajectory of Juozas Keliuotis (1902–1983). During the 1930s, Keliuotis emerged as a prominent intellectual, art and literary critic, as well as organizer of literary life in Kaunas. He embodied the aspirations of the new generation of Catholic intellectuals, who, inspired by Šalkauskis, aimed to advance national culture on religious grounds. Keliuotis subscribed to Šalkauskis's agenda of cultural advancement, seeking to dynamize national culture through the appropriation of the best cultural examples from other nations. Despite lacking originality, Keliuotis wielded considerable influence in the cultural life of interwar, shaping the minds of many.

Keliuotis's biography was typical for the Catholic intellectual of his generation. A member of *Ateitis* organization, he was among the first cohort of students to enroll in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the newly established University of Kaunas in 1923. Keliuotis was immediately drawn to philosophy and was among the students that under the supervision of Pranas Kuraitis translated *Grundriss der Geschichte der*

Philosophie (1894) by the German Catholic philosopher Albert Stöckl, the first neo-scholastic philosophy textbook ever to appear in Lithuanian language. Keliuotis chose to specialize in philosophy and attended courses on pedagogy and philosophy of culture taught by Šalkauskis, as well as classes on the history of modern philosophy by Kuraitis.¹⁵ While still a student, he started editing the Catholic youth magazine *Pavasaris* (*The Spring*) and his essays appeared in other Catholic publications, such as *Ateitis* and *Židinys*. He graduated in 1926 with a thesis on Immanuel Kant's practical philosophy and received funding from the Catholic Academy of Sciences for advanced studies abroad, which allowed him to spend three years from 1926 to 1929 in Paris, attending classes in philosophy, literature, journalism, art history, and sociology at the Sorbonne. He intended to write doctoral thesis on *The Psychology of Press* (*Spaudos psichologija*) but did not finish it after he returned to Lithuania in 1929.

In Paris, he encountered with city's rich cultural scene, and he learned about the newest trends in modernist literature and arts, which had lasting impact on his thinking.¹⁶ For our purposes, it is important to note the difference between French and Lithuanian philosophical life. Keliuotis later wrote that the spirit of neo-Thomist philosophy that prevailed at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas seemed to him "totally unacceptable, too stagnant, too static, too scholastic, medieval, and not in keeping with the intellectual needs of twentieth-century man."¹⁷

¹⁵ Juozas Brazauskas, *Juozo Keliuočio drama: Biografinė apybraiža* [Juozas Keliuotis's drama: Biographical outline] (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2017), 27; Juozas Girnius, "Sveikiname neužmirštamą Juozą Keliuotį" [Congratulations to the unforgettable Juozas Keliuotis], *Aidai*, 1972, No. 6, 301-4.

¹⁶ Jolita Mulevičiūtė, "The Programme of the Journal *Naujoji Romuva* and Its Impact upon Lithuanian Art," *Reinterpreting the Past: Traditionalist Artistic Trends in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1920s and 1930s*, ed. Irena Kossowska (Warsaw: Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2010), 231-44, here at: 233.

¹⁷ Juozas Keliuotis "Atsiminimai apie S. Nėrį" [Reminiscences on Nėris], Juozas Keliuotis fund, Box 31, Folder 47, p. 4, Rear Books' and Manuscripts' Room, Lithuanian National Library, Vilnius, Lithuania.

In Paris, Keliuotis became interested in the spiritualist currents of French philosophy, discovering the writings of Maurice Blondel and Henri Bergson. He also mentioned other contemporary French philosophers as important to his intellectual formation, such as Édouard Le Roy, Gabriel Marcel, and Emanuel Mounier, all of whom were Catholic thinkers that drew on modern secular thought to negotiate their relationship with Neo-Scholasticism.¹⁸ The spiritualist tendencies of these French intellectuals had a lasting, even if not always obvious, impact on Keliuotis's thinking, while his fascination with French culture was evident throughout his journalistic interventions and art criticism of the 1930s.

Upon his returning to Lithuania, Keliuotis quickly established himself as a significant figure in the country's cultural press, due to his exceptional organizational skills and prolific writing. He was appointed as Chief Editor of the Christian Democratic newspaper *Rytas* (*The Mourning*) in 1929, but was dismissed just three months later due to disagreements over the newspaper's political line. Keliuotis believed that the newspaper should distance from the Christian Democrat party, however, *Rytas* continued to serve as the party's ideological platform until it ceased publication in 1936. Keliuotis went to briefly edit the Catholic youth journal *Ateities spinduliai* (*Rays of the Future*) and the modernist literary almanac *Granitas* (*Granite*, 1930). However, the real turning point in his career came with the launch of *Naujoji Romuva* (*The New Sanctuary*), a new Catholic cultural and literary review that Keliuotis founded in 1931. Through *Naujoji Romuva*, Keliuotis sought to modernize Lithuanian literary and artistic life, with the goal of "catching up" with the more cultured nations of the West. *Naujoji Romuva* gradually evolved into a platform for young Catholic

¹⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, *Mano autobiografija* [My autobiography] (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2003), 83.

intellectuals to discuss the new directions in Lithuanian culture, and Keliuotis played a significant role in shaping the cultural agenda of his generation.

Keliuotis believed in dissociating oneself from party politics, a view shared by many Catholic intellectuals of his generation. He stressed the importance of authentic cultural expression, as he proclaimed in his early twenties: “I feel sorry for this environment of old age and dogmatism. I cannot look at you who are drowned in the waves of apathy nirvana, drowned in the footnotes [*smulkmenose*] of life and its dirt, who when you were young you became old and calmly adapted to the stagnant, [and] lifeless forms of life.”¹⁹ He wanted to be original and spontaneous, while simultaneously aiming to inspire a larger movement. In the pages of *Naujoji Romuva*, he proclaimed a certain “spiritual revolution,” arguing for a certain spiritual and cultural reform that could unleash the inner energies of the nation, enabling the “intoxicating dynamism” of the spirit to transform the obsolete forms of life.²⁰ The advertisement from 1930 proclaimed, “A revolution, a revolution, will be sparked in our press by the most modern, richly illustrated, weekly, cultural, societal, literary, scholarly, and artistic magazine *Naujoji Romuva*.”²¹

Keliuotis believed in spiritual and cultural renewal, which he connected to modernist art and literature. In his view, aesthetics exemplified wider tendencies evident in modernity, making it one of the quintessential expressions of modern life. Keliuotis rejected materialism, routine, and stagnation and instead valued free and spontaneous creativity, vitality, dynamism, and youth. Throughout the 1930s, Keliuotis expressed a

¹⁹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Į aukštuosius kalnus” [Towards the high mountains], *Ateitis*, 1924, No. 5, 266.

²⁰ Vytautas Kubilius, “Kito pasaulio esu žmogus” [I am a man of another world], in Juozas Keliuotis, *Meno tragizmas: Studijos ir straipsniai apie literatūrą ir meną*, ed. Rūta Jasionienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1997), 542-55.

²¹ *Revoliuciją, revoliuciją, mūsų spaudoje sukels moderniškiausias, gausiai iliustruotas, savaitinis, kultūros, visuomenės, literatūros, mokslo ir dailės žurnalas Naujoji Romuva* [A revolution, a revolution, will be sparked in our press by the most modern, richly illustrated, weekly cultural, societal, literary, scholarly and artistic magazine *Naujoji Romuva*] (Kaunas: Naujoji Romuva, 1930).

fascination with the continuous change of modernity, opening his 1935 book by a statement that “[w]e are living in extraordinarily interesting and wonderfully intense times.”²² Keliuotis urged Lithuanian cultural intelligentsia to follow the rhythm of the present life and search for new ways of expression.²³ However, Keliuotis’s initiatives faced opposition from conservative circles within the Catholic cultural intelligentsia. They considered his aesthetic tastes too modern and saw him as unreliable in his views because he refused to follow the political line of the Christian Democrat party.²⁴ Some, like Dambrauskas, labeled him a “Catholic Bolshevik” and called for a “Catholicization” of *Naujoji Romuva*.²⁵ Despite the backlash, the journal became a forum for discussing and reflecting on the developments of Lithuanian culture and society.

Keliuotis was an anti-materialist who believed in the vision of history as a creative evolution, which he attributed to Bergson, whom he ranked among the most original thinkers. Keliuotis emphasized creativity, novelty, individuality, inspiration, and originality in his art criticism, and referred to Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* (1907) to describe the creative impulse of modern times: “It is a creative evolution that never allows anyone to stand still. It is a vital impulse that knows neither rest nor limits, that demands constant change, and that seeks endlessly for new forms.”²⁶ For Keliuotis, history was a continuous flow forward, always connected with the past and the future,

²² Juozas Keliuotis, *Visuomeninis idealas: Visuomeninės filosofijos metmenys* [The societal ideal: An outline of societal philosophy] (Kaunas: Naujoji Romuva, 1935), 5.

²³ Vytautas Kubilius, “Kito pasaulio esu žmogus” [I am a man of another world], in Juozas Keliuotis, *Meno tragizmas: Studijos ir straipsniai apie literatūrą ir meną*, ed. Rūta Jasionienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1997), 542-55.

²⁴ Dangiras Mačiulis, “*Naujosios Romuvos* trajektorija: Nuo tautos vienybės projekto iki kultūrinės saviizoliacijos” [The trajectory of *Naujoji Romuva*: From the project of national unity to cultural self-isolation], *Darbai ir dienos* (38) (2004): 17-48, here at: 19.

²⁵ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Adomas Jakštas], “Mūsų kova su trečiafrontininkais” [Our fight with the third front], *Židinys*, 1931, No. 8-9, 106.

²⁶ Juozas Keliuotis, *Visuomeninis idealas: Visuomeninės filosofijos metmenys* [The societal ideal: An outline of societal philosophy] (Kaunas: Naujoji Romuva, 1935), 7.

and full of limitless possibilities: “The more we will deepen [our understanding of] the nature of time, the better we will understand that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the constant production of total novelty.”²⁷ He saw no radical progress or radical regress in history, only a continuous evolution.

Keliuotis gathered a group of young Lithuanian writers and artists to establish a modern Lithuanian culture, using *Naujoji Romuva* as a platform to promote their work. The title of the journal, which means “new” *Romuva*, reflected Keliuotis’s affinity with the ideas of his teacher, Šalkauskis. In the early 1920s, Šalkauskis launched his own literary journal, *Romuva*, a short-lived outlet that aimed to give Lithuanian national culture a universal value. Keliuotis echoed this mission, calling for the harmonization of individuality and universality in the upliftment of national culture.²⁸ Therefore, *Naujoji Romuva* can be seen as an interpretation and embodiment of Šalkauskis’s envisioned cultural synthesis, which sought to express the universal content of the human spirit in the forms of national individuality. Keliuotis urged the youth to initiate a “spiritual and creative renaissance” that would propel them towards a collective realization of national civilization.²⁹ This was a call as much for individual renewal as for the acceleration of the cultural life of the nation. Keliuotis believed that the younger had to reshape life according to their ideals. He asserted that those with a powerful creative spirit could create their own circumstances and were not enslaved by them, emphasizing the need for heroism. Only warriors could reach the rocky peaks, he claimed, while even the stump could roll down from the hill.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²⁸ [Juozas Keliuotis], “Redakcijos žodis” [Editorial word], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 1, 2.

²⁹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Prie dvasinio ir kūrybinio renesanso” [Towards spiritual and creative renaissance], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 44, 1041-2.

³⁰ Juozas Keliuotis, “Ko siekia *Naujoji Romuva*” [What does *Naujoji Romuva* seek], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 48, 1137-9, here at: 1139.

Keliuotis represented a modernist version of Catholicism popular among his generation of Catholic intellectuals who aimed to establish a national culture that was both modern and compatible with religion. He asserted that modern Lithuanian culture had to be reconciled with Catholicism, and *Naujoji Romuva* aimed to do so by promoting the “*ideas of Christian culture and national civilization*” in a way that was appealing to the contemporary reader.³¹ Keliuotis argued that one must live “the present life and worship the Almighty in the language of the twentieth century.”³² He combined the aim for cultural progress with a focus on spirituality, reflecting the vision shared by many young Catholics in Lithuania: “we want to live, to create new values, and to manifest in new forms without denying the element of eternal life. [...] We are the blacksmiths of the present and the people of the future.”³³ As reflected in the pages of *Naujoji Romuva*, Keliuotis called to create Lithuania that would be both modern and Catholic.

Keliuotis was proud to be a student of his teacher, with whom he maintained a personal connection even after finishing his studies. Although Keliuotis found Šalkauskis’s rational manner of thought too restrictive for addressing the irrational and vitalist elements of the nation, he remained loyal to his teacher’s ideas.³⁴ In fact, Keliuotis repeated Šalkauskis’s key formula for cultural synthesis in his own writings: “true patriotism [...] seeks to express the universal content of the human spirit in the forms of national individuality.”³⁵ Even decades later, following what he learned from Šalkauskis, Keliuotis explained that the truly vital national individuality was a

³¹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Ko siekia *Naujoji Romuva*” [What does *Naujoji Romuva* seek], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 47, 1113-4.

³² Juozas Keliuotis, “Modernusis žmogus” [Modern man], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932, No. 15, 337-40, here at: 337.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Juozas Keliuotis, “Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas” [Lithuanian nation and its education], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933, No. 138-9, 673-7.

³⁵ Juozas Keliuotis, “Patriotizmas ir pažanga” [Patriotism and progress], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 10, 225-6, here at 266.

combination of the particular and the universal, using the metaphor of three to express this idea. To stay healthy, Keliuotis explained, tree had to be rooted in national traditions, but always grow towards the direction of the best examples of other cultures: “The roots of the beautifully growing tree of culture are national traditions and folk art, while the trunk, branches, and leaves are communication with its epoch and with the culture and civilization of the whole world. A culture that has lost its roots becomes into a lifeless, [and] felled tree, [that is] into a philistine and international cosmopolitanism. A culture without the trunk, branches, and leaves [on the other hand] is a reactionism, [and] provincialism, it is standing water.”³⁶ While these lines were written decades later, they were reflective of his views from the 1930s. Keliuotis argued that Lithuanian nation-building required creative appropriation of the greatest achievements of culture from other nations while maintaining the nation’s own traditions. Cultural progress depended on this creative synthesis: “we have to keep pace with the most cultured nations of Western Europe, of course, not imitating them slavishly, but creating them freely and independently and relying on our own national traditions.”³⁷ Keliuotis believed that through creative appropriation, Lithuanian culture could “catch up” with more advanced nations and be raised to the level of Western European cultures.

Keliuotis shared with Šalkauskis the idea of advancing Lithuanian culture through a “creative synthesis” of the best examples from other cultures. In *Naujoji Romuva*, Keliuotis sought to modernize national culture by introducing the latest modern European artistic and literary trends and “ideals of cultural life” more generally. However, Keliuotis contradicted Šalkauskis’s idea that modernizing Lithuania

³⁶ Juozas Keliuotis, *Mano autobiografija* [My autobiography] (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2003), 195.

³⁷ Ibid.

required a fusion of Eastern and Western elements. Instead, he and many others of his generation believed that only Western Europe could inspire Lithuania's national project. In his 1928 essay "Russia, Western Europe, and Lithuania," published while he was living in Paris, Keliuotis argued that Western Europe was superior to Russia in all crucial aspects of civilization. Keliuotis dismissed Russian culture as being "very low in terms of social, intellectual, moral, material and technical culture."³⁸ Keliuotis traced the shortcomings of Lithuanian cultural and political life as having their roots in the habits and thinking that came from Russian culture, suggesting that getting rid of the Russian mindset was an essential task in the modernizing of Lithuania. When Šalkauskis published his 1933 book *Lithuanian Nation and Its Education* (*Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas*), Keliuotis wrote a lengthy review disputing his teacher's claim that Lithuanian national individuality contained the elements of the spirit of the East, such as passivity and inclination towards contemplation, as scientifically unfounded. This belief, Keliuotis asserted, was "just a myth, a legend, a beautiful romantic dream, not based on any scholarly knowledge."³⁹ Keliuotis saw Westernization as a means for Lithuanians to overcome negative traits in the Lithuanian national psychology that had developed due to living for long ages without their statehood.

Keliuotis saw France as the major representative of the West that Lithuania should emulate in its pursuit of modernizing its national culture. He believed that Lithuania should look towards nations with which it had no direct borders, to avoid assimilation. *Naujoji Romuva* paid particular attention to French intellectual and literary life, in

³⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, "Rusija, Vakarų Europa ir Lietuva" [Russia, Western Europe and Lithuania], *Židinys*, 1928, No. 11, 233-6; Juozas Keliuotis, "Rusija, Vakarų Europa ir Lietuva" [Russia, Western Europe and Lithuania] *Židinys*, 1928, No. 12, 399-410.

³⁹ Juozas Keliuotis, "Lietuvių tauta ir jos ugdymas" [Lithuanian nation and its education], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933, No. 140-1, 697-700.

visual arts favoring movements such as fauvism, cubism, and expressionism.⁴⁰ In contrast, Keliuotis denigrated German literature and philosophy, viewing the “Teutonic Germanism” as a threat to Lithuanian national culture.⁴¹ He advocated for the adoption of positive examples from abroad while cautioning against negative influences of foreign culture on Lithuanian national individuality. Keliuotis argued for a certain cultural and spiritual independence as essential for the survival of the Lithuanian nation, believing that Lithuanians should “destroy all the fortress of Polishness and Russianness” in the minds of their co-nationals and “show the doors to all the apostles of Germanism.”⁴² Keliuotis encouraged the appropriation of foreign cultural advancements while promoting Lithuanian cultural intelligentsia. He believed that the state should establish favorable conditions for Lithuanian writers, painters, and musicians to create Lithuanian culture, so they could break away from provincialism and produce original art. For this reason, he was against inviting foreigners from abroad to create culture in Lithuania, stating that such behavior was an insult to the Lithuanian nation and pushed it into futile, empty cosmopolitanism.⁴³

Keliuotis was instrumental in modernizing cultural life in interwar Kaunas, aiming to reconcile Catholicism with Lithuanian national culture, despite the tensions between the Catholic Church and the authoritarian regime. He established an informal discussion club where young intellectuals could exchange ideas, and through *Naujoji Romuva* he provided a platform for the young Catholic intellectuals to voice their

⁴⁰ Jolita Mulevičiūtė, “Juozas Keliuotis apie daile: Trečiojo kelio vizija” [Juozas Keliuotis on visual art: The third way vision], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 1999, No. 3, 125-30.

⁴¹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Kova dėl tautinės kultūros” [The struggle for national culture], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932, No. 19, 433-5.

⁴² Juozas Keliuotis, “Dvasinės ir kultūrinės nepriklausomybės klausimu” [On the issue of the spiritual and cultural independence], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1932, No. 41, 865-6.

⁴³ Juozas Keliuotis, “Gyvenimo vingiuose (apie Faustą Kiršą, 2007)” [In the twists and turns of life (about Faustus Kirša, 2007)], *Tekstai*, accessed on 10 June 2022, at <http://www.tekstai.lt/tekstu-naujienos/7550-juozas-keliuotis-apie-fausta-kirsa>

views.⁴⁴ Keliuotis was not tied to any particular philosophical school or political line, and his journal welcomed contributions from authors of different ideological stripes.⁴⁵ This open-minded approach allowed for a fertile ground for dialogue, shaping the aesthetic views and formulating agenda of the young Catholic intellectuals. In the early 1930s, *Naujoji Romuva* became the foremost cultural and literary review in Lithuania. Keliuotis was difficult to categorize politically, as his focus was on Lithuanian cultural advancement and catching up with Western Europe. A Polish journalist Tadeusz Katelbach, who lived in Kaunas and followed its cultural life up close, in 1935 explained to Polish audiences the modernizing effect that *Naujoji Romuva* had on Lithuanian cultural life: “A sincere group of the journal’s collaborators and friends agrees with the fact that in the ‘European cultural race,’ Lithuania is lagging behind, that it is necessary to work at an ‘alarm pace’ to cover the losses that have occurred as a result. And they go boldly forward and fight in the areas of cultural life with old superstitions, with routine; according to them, living only on the account of the past is a theft.”⁴⁶ When Keliuotis published a Lithuanian translation of Katelbach’s article in *Naujoji Romuva*, it affirmed Keliuotis’s perception of his own significance as an intellectual in Lithuania. The attention from a foreign journalist validated his work, and Katelbach’s positive assessment of *Naujoji Romuva* aligned with Keliuotis’s own view of his mission as a modernizer of Lithuanian culture.

⁴⁴ Romualdas Juzefovičius, “Juozas Keliuotis ir Lietuvos akademinė inteligentija tarpukariu” [Juozas Keliuotis and the Lithuanian academic intelligentsia between the wars], *Keliuočių centras*, accessed on 10 June 2022, <https://www.keliuociucentras.rvb.lt/lt/tekstai/juozas-keliuotis-ir-tarpukario-lietuvos-akademine-inteligentija>

⁴⁵ Different interpretation was given by Dangiras Mačiulis, who suggested that Keliuotis sought to reconcile Christian Democrats and the *Tautininkai* party, see Dangiras Mačiulis, *Valstybės kultūros politika Lietuvoje 1927-1940 metais* [State’s cultural policy in Lithuania, 1927-1940] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2005), 219-262.

⁴⁶ Tadeusz Katelbach, “Litewscy poszukiwacze nowych dróg” [Lithuanians that seek for new ways], *Gazeta Polska*, January 28, 1935, 3. Lithuanian translation of Katelbach’s account soon appeared in the pages of *Naujoji Romuva*, see Tadeusz Katelbach, “Naujų kelių jieškotojai lietuviuose” [Lithuanians that seek for new ways], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 15, 356.

2. 3. Pranas Dielininkaitis and the Organization of Schooling

Pranas Dielininkaitis (1902–1942) was a Catholic sociologist who belonged to the young generation of Lithuanian Catholics. From a young age, Dielininkaitis stood out as a talented Catholic activist, becoming a prominent socialite of Kaunas and actively participating in several institutional frameworks. He was a board member, course organizer, and lecturer, demonstrating his remarkable intellectual and organizational skills.⁴⁷ His unique combination of intellectual and activist abilities was unparalleled among other Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals of his generation. Despite his notable contributions, Dielininkaitis remains largely overlooked by historians. His untimely death in 1942 relegated him to a marginal role in the cultural and intellectual histories of interwar Lithuania.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as we shall see in chapters 3 and 5, his interventions were instrumental in shaping the social and political agendas of his generation of Catholic intellectuals. He was the major representative of the Catholic brand of sociology in interwar Lithuania, and his ideas were typical of social Catholicism that was fashionable among many other Catholic intellectuals in Europe.

Dielininkaitis's upbringing was greatly influenced by Catholic institutions, which played a crucial role in his social advancement. He began his education at the Pedagogical Seminary in Marijampolė with the intention of becoming a

⁴⁷ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ignas Skrupskelis: Asmenybė ir laikmetis* [Ignas Skrupskelis: Personality and times] (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014), 109.

⁴⁸ For example, the most extensive survey on the history of political thought in Lithuania to this date, Justinas Dementavičius's *Tarp ūkininko ir piliečio*, in its main text (excluding footnotes) mentions Dielininkaitis 2 times. In comparison, Šalkauskis is mentioned 17 times, while Maceina 24 times. See Justinas Dementavičius, *Tarp ūkininko ir piliečio: Modernėjančios Lietuvos politinės minties istorija* [Between farmer and citizen: A history of modernising Lithuanian political thought] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2015).

schoolteacher.⁴⁹ However, it was his studies at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Kaunas that proved to be the steppingstone in his career. There, he spent four years majoring in sociology and attending the lectures of Šalkauskis, whose influence on his thinking will be discussed later. During this time, Dielininkaitis also emerged as a talented leader and orator in the activities of *Ateitis*, a Catholic youth movement. During his undergraduate years, he established a close relationship with the neo-scholastic philosopher Pranas Kuraitis, who became his supervisor and mentor. Kuraitis accommodated Dielininkaitis in his apartment for a while and later organized funding for him to travel to France for a summer course to learn French. This proved to be particularly useful when, in 1928, with the help of his supervisor, Dielininkaitis was granted a scholarship to advance his studies and write a doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne.

Dielininkaitis's studies at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy were followed by advanced studies abroad, as he was part of a wave of Lithuanians who traveled to France to further their education. As we shall see, Dielininkaitis's case demonstrates that studying abroad had a significant impact on young Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals, shaping their political language and intellectual references. In France, Dielininkaitis integrated his training in Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture with the sociology of the Durkheim school. He pursued a doctoral degree in sociology at the Faculty of Letters of the Sorbonne, where he worked with the students and collaborators of Émile Durkheim, Célestin Bouglé, and Paul Fauconnet. At that time, the Sorbonne was only one of three universities in France to have officially introduced the position of lecturer in sociology (at other universities, sociology was chosen as a specialization in philosophy studies, and its lectures were mostly given by philosophy

⁴⁹ Julius Būtėnas, *Lietuvos žurnalistai* [Lithuanian journalists] (Vilnius: Žurnalistika, 1991), 114.

lecturers).⁵⁰ Upon returning to Lithuania in 1933, Dielininkaitis emerged as the leading voice of Catholic labor activism in Lithuania, advocating for social support for the needy and corporatist reforms as a solution to the social question.

In order to understand Dielininkaitis's doctoral dissertation on his thinking and political language, it is important to examine the work that he produced while studying in Paris under the guidance of French professors. During his time in Paris, Dielininkaitis chose to write his dissertation on the topic of cultural autonomy, an idea that had been advocated by his former professors in Kaunas, Šalkauskis and Pakštas (this idea is explored further in chapter 3 of the dissertation). It is worth noting that the political implications of sociology were quite different in Paris compared to his previous studies under Catholic professors in Kaunas. At the Sorbonne, sociology was associated with left-wing ideas and Republicanism, rather than Catholicism. In a letter to a fellow Lithuanian Catholic intellectual, Dielininkaitis remarked that he faced challenges in reconciling his Catholicism with the expectations of his professors, writing that "Of course, as a Catholic, I will have a lot of difficulties."⁵¹ Another colleague of Dielininkaitis confirmed this sentiment, stating that the Parisian professors "did not find such topic [on cultural autonomy] close to their hearts."⁵² Despite these challenges, Dielininkaitis persisted in his investigation of cultural autonomy, focusing specifically on the study of different schooling systems.

⁵⁰ They both sought to separate sociology from its connections with materialism and believed that there was no strict distinction between sociology and moral philosophy. In addition, Bouglé was convinced that sociological studies should provide guidelines for further social action. See Johan Heilbron, *French Sociology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), 94-109; William Logue, "The 'Sociological Turn' in French Liberal Thought," 247-8. In *French Liberalism from Montesquieu to the Present Day*, ed. by Raf Geenens et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Derek Robbins, "From Solidarity to Social Inclusion: The Political Transformations of Durkheimianism," *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes* 17 (2011): 88-91.

⁵¹ Pranas Dielininkaitis to Zenonas Ivinskis, 25 July 1929, Box 29, Folder 1128, Item 3, Zenonas Ivinskis fund, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania.

⁵² Jonas Grinius, "Dr. Pranas Dielininkaitis (1902-1942)," 225. In *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 4, ed. Antanas Liuima, (Roma: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1961).

Šalkauskis viewed cultural autonomy as a central aspect of the ideal relationship between the state and society, and Dielininkaitis applied this concept to his sociological research, producing a dissertation entitled “The State and the Education” which compared education systems in the Soviet Union, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In his work, he provided a historical overview of the different legislations that guided primary, secondary, and university systems in each country, while also exploring the social and political factors that influenced their development. The dissertation was later published under the title *The School Freedom and the State* (1933).⁵³ Through his comparative analysis, Dielininkaitis stressed that cultural autonomy had been successfully implemented in Belgium and the Netherlands, whose examples had to be followed in other countries.

Writing his doctoral dissertation, Dielininkaitis had clear normative stakes, providing not only a comparative analysis of schooling systems and their legislation in different countries but also suggesting how the state should act in the field of education. Dielininkaitis distinguished three characteristic types of the organization of education: the monopoly of schooling, the freedom of education “outside the state,” and the freedom of education “through the state.” He rejected the monopoly of schooling institutionalized in the Soviet Union, where one group infused all entire society with its ideology; Dielininkaitis also rejected the system of state neutrality in France, which he called the freedom of education “outside the state,” where the state organized public schooling and allowed private initiative establishing private schools without allocating them public funding. Dielininkaitis argued that the most desirable education system would be if the state treated private and public schools on equal grounds, providing both of them with the finances necessary to operate, as established in the

⁵³ Pranas Dielininkaitis, *La Liberté scolaire et l'Etat: régimes soviétique, français, belge et hollandais. Vers une solution synthétique* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1933).

education systems of Belgium and the Netherlands. He claimed that society only benefited if the state trusted the social groups and supported their initiatives, which he named the liberty of schooling “through the state”. He argued that the state must allow private initiative to establish private schools and universities, providing them with necessary subsidies. In this way, the state would acknowledge the autonomy of schooling and allow social groups to take care of their education. According to Dielininkaitis, only this type of system could bring harmony among different social groups, which would be based on a differentiated federalism of cultural groups that applied without exception to both minorities and majorities. Implicitly, this was an argument for the autonomy of Catholic society from the state in the sphere of education. Dielininkaitis described this model as a “synthetic solution” to the problem of education, echoing the language of philosophy of culture.

In 1933, after spending five years in France, Dielininkaitis defended his doctoral thesis, becoming the only sociologist with a doctoral degree in interwar Lithuania. In the same year, Dielininkaitis published his dissertation in French as a book under the new title, *The School Freedom and the State*. The neo-scholastic Kuraitis, his former supervisor, was particularly pleased with Dielininkaitis, addressing him in a letter under a diminutive version of his name: “The first doctor of the Sorbonne in Lithuania, and with the highest honors! Both you and I, Pranukas, have to cherish your person even more than before. Now, Pranukas, you have made it clear to yourself that you are also very suitable for teaching!”⁵⁴ The book is important for our purposes, because first of all, it indicates Dielininkaitis’s engagement with Šalkauskis’s ideas. Secondly, it is a good example of his social thought; his insistence on the autonomy of

⁵⁴ Kuraitis to Dielininkaitis, 9 June 1933, the personal archive of Danutė Linčiuvienė, as quoted in Tatjana Maceinienė, *Tikėjimas ir ateitis: Ignas Skrupskelis ir Pranas Dielininkaitis* [Faith and the future: Ignas Skrupskelis ir Pranas Dielininkaitis] (Aidai: Vilnius 2006), 115.

social groups vis-à-vis the state and support of private initiative was evident in his later interwar writings as well.

Dielininkaitis's "synthetic solution" with its clearly expressed anti-statist sentiment that he articulated in his newly published book gained certain recognition in France. It is worth noting that the book was published by the prestigious Félix Alcan publishing house, which published the sociological studies of Émile Durkheim and his students as well as the school's journal *Année Sociologique*.⁵⁵ When published, the book received favorable reviews in the French press. For example, a reviewer from *Mercure de France* described Dielininkaitis's book as a strong study, *une forte étude*, calling the idea of cultural autonomy in education a wise solution.⁵⁶ Equally importantly, *The School Freedom and the State* received phrases in the Catholic press. For example, the Dominican review *La Vie Intellectuelle* singled it out as an important contribution to the discussion on the role of the state in society.⁵⁷ Moreover, the prominent Jesuit theologian Yves de La Brière too responded positively to the book, writing in the Jesuit journal *Études* that this "testimony from the new Europe invites us to reflect on the vanity of overly categorical and rigid formulas in such complex matters as the laws of education in an ever-changing world."⁵⁸ Even Jacques Maritain, who referred to Dielininkaitis in his book on the organization of temporal order, assessed favorably Dielininkaitis's view that education should be organized according to the principle of the liberty of schooling "through the state."⁵⁹ Thus, the idea first born in the circle of

⁵⁵ On Félix Alcan publishing house and its role in publishing the sociological studies of the Durkheimians: Yash Nandan, "Editor's Introduction," 40-42, in Emile Durkheim, *Contributions to L'Année Sociologique*, ed. Yash Nandan (New York: Free Press, 1980).

⁵⁶ Henri Mazel, "Science sociale," *Mercure de France*, January 15, 1934, 427-36.

⁵⁷ P. B., "Le Semaine sociale de Reims," *La Vie intellectuelle*, September 25, 1933, 638-42, here at: 641.

⁵⁸ Yves de La Brière, "La question scolaire," *Études*, 1933, No. 7-9, 747.

⁵⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Du Régime temporel et de la Liberté* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1933), 82n2.

Šalkauskis and then developed by Dielininkaitis drew the attention of some of the leading Catholic intellectuals in France.

Even if at the time *The School Freedom and the State* were not translated into Lithuanian, its importance lies in the fact, that in it Dielininkaitis formulated his views on the relation between the state and society, which he repeatedly asserted in his later interventions in Lithuanian Catholics press.⁶⁰ In Lithuania, the book received much less coverage than in France, even if its reviews appeared in some Catholic journals.⁶¹ One must give particular attention to the review written by the closest pupil of Šalkauskis, Maceina, whom Šalkauskis perceived as his successor in the fields of philosophy of culture and philosophical pedagogy. In a lengthy review that was published in the official outlet of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, *Tiesos Kelias* (*The Way of Truth*), Maceina pointed out Dielininkaitis's indebtedness to Šalkauskis. Grounded in the principles first formulated by their teacher, the findings of Dielininkaitis's book, Maceina claimed, only confirmed the rightfulness of Šalkauskis's advocated ideas: the book "provides a *great deal* of material confirming the requirements of the principles."⁶² Overall, Maceina evaluated his colleague's thesis especially positively: "The work is of great benefit to both the pedagogue and the sociologist. For the former, by revealing the social importance of education and by showing concrete examples; for the latter, by giving pedagogical principles and

⁶⁰ Dielininkaitis translated into Lithuanian only experts of his dissertation, which were published a specialized journal for pedagogical studies, see Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Valstybė, auklėjimas ir mokyklinė laisvė" [The state, education and schooling freedom], *Lietuvos mokykla*, 1937, No. 2, 85-90; Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Valstybė, auklėjimas ir mokyklinė laisvė" [The state, education and schooling freedom], *Lietuvos mokykla*, 1937, No. 3, 165-70; Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Valstybė, auklėjimas ir mokyklinė laisvė" [The state, education and schooling freedom], *Lietuvos mokykla*, 1937, No. 4, 245-52; Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Valstybė, auklėjimas ir mokyklinė laisvė" [The state, education and schooling freedom], *Lietuvos mokykla*, 1937, No. 5, 325-33.

⁶¹ Antanas Maceina, "Mokyklų laisvė ir valstybė" [The freedom of schools and the state], *Tiesos kelias*, 1933, No. 11, 666-77; S. A. "P. Dielininkaitis, *La liberte scolaire*" [Review], *Židinys*, 1933, No. 8-9, 236-8;

⁶² Antanas Maceina, "Mokyklų laisvė ir valstybė" [The freedom of schools and the state], *Tiesos kelias*, 1933, No. 11, 666-77.

pointing out their importance and influence on social life. It is only to be wished that the author would publish his book [...] also in Lithuanian.”⁶³ Unsurprisingly, Šalkauskis referred to *The School Freedom and the State* in his lectures on pedagogy, when discussing the preferred organization of the schooling system.⁶⁴

While living in France, Dielininkaitis made contact with the French Christian Democrats, the Popular Democratic Party (*Parti Démocrate Populaire*). In 1931, as the “representative of Lithuanian Christian Democracy” together with another seven Catholic intellectuals from other European countries he signed a Christian Democrat manifesto that condemned the intransigent nationalism that they saw on the rise in Europe following the Great Depression of the 1930s. Their manifesto demonstrated a certain moderation that aimed to avoid extremes in politics. The authors “condemn[ed] and repudiate[d] any call for violence as a crime and a folly, and affirm[ed] their unwavering determination to make every effort [...] to guide public opinion in the direction of both economic and political collaboration of the peoples and the organization of peace, and to continue and develop the policy of European and world pacification, following the methods and means implemented by the League of Nations.”⁶⁵ One must point out that by signing the such manifesto, Dielininkaitis remained in agreement with the principles that were outlined in Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture, which asserted the Christian ideal of culture as the guiding principle of nation-building that avoided exclusivist nationalism.

This period in Paris was a formative experience for Dielininkaitis that shaped his understanding of Catholicism and the social tactics that he used after coming back to

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Lavinimo mokslas,” [The science of upbringing], 26-31. In *Rinktiniai Raštai* [The collected writings], ed. Juozas Girnius (Roma: Lietuvos katalikų mokslo akademija, 1991).

⁶⁵ “Pour l’organisation de la Paix des Peuples,” *L’Œuvre*, January 10, 1931, 5.

Lithuania. During his studies in Paris Dielininkaitis has deepened, in his own words, “the knowledge of sociological science and social life” not only at the Sorbonne but also the Catholic Institute of Paris.⁶⁶ Moreover, Dielininkaitis participated in French Catholic youth congresses: in 1928, he attended a French youth congress in Grenoble, while in 1931, in Algeria, then a colony of France.⁶⁷ In Paris, Dielininkaitis observed up close the vibrant life of Catholic labor unions, which possibly impacted his views on the importance of trade activism.⁶⁸ Therefore, Dielininkaitis was acquainted with French Catholic social thought and the working methods of Catholic social movements in France.

He was one of the few Catholics in Lithuania who showed interest in the issues faced by the urban proletariat. After returning to Lithuania in 1933, he quickly gained prominence as a Catholic social activist and thinker. He was appointed as a senior assistant at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas, where he delivered lectures on sociology and state theory.⁶⁹ Dielininkaitis’s articles and reviews were published in several significant Catholic magazines and newspapers of the time, such as *Židinys*, *Rytas*, *Ateitis*, and *Darbininkas* (*The Worker*). As a Catholic sociologist, he combined his interest in social theories with his public engagement. Ambrazevičius, one of his close friends and colleagues, later noted that

⁶⁶ For the photocopy of Dielininkaitis’s autobiographical expose see Tatjana Maccinienė, *Tikėjimas ir ateitis: Ignas Skrupskelis ir Pranas Dielininkaitis* [Faith and the future: Ignas Skrupskelis and Pranas Dielininkaitis] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2006), 95.

⁶⁷ His interest in European Catholic life and participation in international congresses was not limited to his study period in France. In 1936, Dielininkaitis attended the congress of the international Catholic student organization *Pax Romana* in Austria. “Dr. Pr. Dielininkaitis i užsienį,” [Dr. Pr. Dielininkaitis goes abroad], *Darbininkas*, July 25, 1936, 3.

⁶⁸ The article of Catholic labour union’s newspaper, *Darbininkas*, which provided an overview of Dielininkaitis’s activities in Catholic workers’ organizations, noted that in Paris Dielininkaitis attended some of the meetings of labour Catholic labour union. Most probably, it conveyed the testimony of Dielininkaitis himself, see “Dr. Pr. Dielininkaitis,” *Darbininkas*, December 30, 1938, 12.

⁶⁹ For example, during the spring semester of 1938 Dielininkaitis taught two courses: one on Christian sociology and the other on political economy; meanwhile in the fall semester of 1939 he taught sociology: *V. D. universiteto Teol-filosofijos fakulteto Filosofijos skyriaus 1938 m. pav. sem. paskaitų tvarkaraštis* (Kaunas: 1938); *V. D. universiteto Teol-filosofijos fakulteto Filosofijos skyriaus 1939 m. rud. sem. paskaitų tvarkaraštis* (Kaunas: 1939).

in Lithuania, Dielininkaitis “was one of the few public figures who combined the *art* of social work with the *science* of society.”⁷⁰

Throughout the rest of the 1930s, Dielininkaitis engaged in the activities of various Catholic organizations. He served as the Chairman of the Board of the *Ateitis* movement from 1933 to 1935 and as the Vice-Chairman of the Lithuanian Christian Workers Union from 1934 to 1940. Dielininkaitis became a major voice of the Catholic workers’ movement and a promoter of Catholic corporatism (for his corporatist social thought, see chapter 3). In his writings, Dielininkaitis frequently expressed his support for a socially-oriented democracy aimed at reducing economic inequality. It was necessary for Lithuania, he argued amid the economic crisis in 1934, to have well-functioning workers’ organizations. He believed that the patriotic-minded intelligentsia had to organize the Christian working class: “the workers are a large [and] organic part of our nation. One of the patriotic deeds would be to bring the intelligentsia closer to the workers,” as well as “to raise the economic, moral and intellectual level of our working poor.”⁷¹

His engagement with social issues made Dielininkaitis rather an exception among other prominent young Catholic intellectuals, most of whom stayed away from labor activism. As a leader of the Lithuanian Christian Workers Union, he consistently emphasized the organization’s primary objective of fostering harmonious relationships between employers and workers. According to him, the organization had to “raise and emphasize Christian principles and attitudes as well as the Christian spirit in the

⁷⁰ Juozas Ambrazevičius, “Pranas Dielininkaitis visuomeniniame darbe” [Pranas Dielininkaitis in societal work], 10-20, here at: 19. In Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Mokyklos laisvė ir valstybė: Sovietų, prancūzų, belgų ir olandų mokyklų sistemos – sintetinio spendimo paieškos* (Šiauliai: Saulės delta, 2000).

⁷¹ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Krikščionių darbininkų suvažiavimo išvakarėse” [On the eve of the congress of Christian workers], *Rytas*, April 14, 1934, 3.

mutual duties and relations of workers and employers.”⁷² As a talented organizer, Dielininkaitis was successful in attracting new members to the organization. By the end of the interwar period, the Lithuanian Christian Workers Union boasted a membership of eight thousand individuals and had established sixty branches across Lithuania, as stated in official records. In addition to this, in 1937, Dielininkaitis represented the Lithuanian Christian Workers Union as a part of the Lithuanian delegation to the International Labor Organization of the League of Nations in Genève, where he further discussed the issues of labor protection.⁷³

2. 4. Antanas Maceina and the Question of National Education

Of all the students of Šalkauskis, Antanas Maceina (1908–1987) became the most prominent representative of philosophy of culture in interwar Lithuania, in his writings providing a complex treatment of the relationship between Catholicism and nationalism. Before immersing himself in philosophy, Maceina tried himself in clerical studies at a theological seminary, seeking to become a Catholic priest; however, soon he switched to a different field. In 1928, Maceina matriculated into the Department of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas, where he majored in philosophy, proving to be one of the most gifted students of Šalkauskis. From his early years, Maceina was as interested in similar problems as Šalkauskis; in fact, Maceina chose to write his undergraduate thesis on the relationship between culture and religion, a topic that was of great interest to his supervisor.⁷⁴ Besides

⁷² Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Mūsų suvažiavimui besiartinant” [As our convention approaches], *Darbininkas*, September 16, 1936, 1.

⁷³ “Dr. Pr. Dielininkaitis į Ženevą” [Dr. Pr. Dielininkaitis into Genève], *Darbininkas*, June 5, 1937, 5.

⁷⁴ Antanas Maceina, “Religijos reikšmė kultūrai” [The significance of religion to culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 10, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2005), 170-264.

studying, Maceina showed his talents as a prolific writer, who published his essays in the most important Catholic outlets, *Židinys*, *Tiesos Kelias*, *Rytas* as well as in Keliuotis's *Naujoji Romuva*. As we shall see, Maceina subscribed to Šalkauskis's cultural universalism, at the same time finding inspiration for his philosophical investigations beyond the cannon of neo-scholastic thought.

Šalkauskis envisioned Maceina as his future successor in the fields of philosophical pedagogy and philosophy of culture. Therefore, in 1932, with the backing of his supervisor, Maceina received funding for advanced studies abroad, where he had the task to write his doctoral dissertation, just like Keliuotis and Dielininkaitis before him. Maceina chose to write his doctoral dissertation in the field of philosophical pedagogy. With the suggestion of his supervisor, Maceina traveled to deepen his knowledge in Western Europe to advance his knowledge of French pedagogical theories.⁷⁵ Starting in 1932, Maceina spent three years studying abroad and taking advanced courses at universities in Leuven, Brussels, Fribourg, and Strasbourg. After coming back to Lithuania, Maceina quickly rose to prominence in Catholic intellectual circles.

Initially a student of Neo-Scholasticism, Maceina increasingly became dissatisfied with this philosophical school. His attitude was shaped by personal experience: Maceina was enrolled twice at Vilkaviškis theological seminary preparing to become a priest; however, both times he dropped out – the first time he was forced to leave after conflict with the superiors, while the second time he chose this by himself. This is how after many years Maceina remembered his studies of philosophy at the

⁷⁵ Šalkauskis encouraged Maceina to specialize in French schools of pedagogy, because “as I have already told you, there are already enough people in Lithuania who have learned in the German school, and not enough people of the French culture.” Stasys Šalkauskis to Antanas Maceina, 16 October 1932, in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012), 310-1, here at: 311.

seminary that consisted of following closely a neo-scholastic textbook written in Latin: “In terms of content, the philosophy of my seminary days was strictly *Thomist*. We did not experience any encounter with other views. It is true that the author of the textbook often referred to Kant, especially in the theory of knowledge and theodicy, but he summed up his criticism in the constantly repeated phrase: ‘insipiens Cantius – Kant is a fool.’ The impression was reinforced that in the history of human thought there had never been a wiser philosopher than Thomas Aquinas and a more foolish one than Kant.”⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, at the seminary Maceina was not much concerned with philosophy; he focused on literature instead, writing his first poems and perhaps secretly dreaming of becoming a renowned poet. It was Šalkauskis who got him interested in philosophy.

Studies abroad only further strengthened his negative views on neo-scholastic orthodoxy. In the autumn of 1932, Maceina arrived at the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Leuven with the task of deepening his expertise in philosophical pedagogy, however, he felt disappointed with his choice. In his letters to Šalkauskis, Maceina expressed his dissatisfaction with his studies in Leuven and even discussed the possibility of moving to Germany.⁷⁷ Instead, Šalkauskis directed him to the University of Fribourg, his alma mater, where Maceina could consult with Šalkauskis’s former supervisor, the neo-scholastic philosopher Marc de Munnynck. Šalkauskis recommended for his supervisee attend de Munnynck’s seminars: “it would be good [for you] to take part in them, as you would have the opportunity to make personal contact with him, and you could, at the right opportunity, raise a

⁷⁶ For Maceina’s reflections on his encounters with philosophical and theology in his youth see Antanas Maceina, “Filosofijos kelis” [Along the path of philosophy], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 6, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 1994), 375-440, here at: 380-96.

⁷⁷ Maceina’s letters to Šalkauskis did not reach our times, however, we can infer Maceina’s mood and opinions during this period from Šalkauskis’s responses to him. See in particular: Stasys Šalkauskis to Antanas Maceina, 16 October 1932, in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012), 310-1.

certain issue that is particularly important to you.”⁷⁸ He even wrote a recommendation letter for Maceina, which was addressed to de Munnynck, and had to facilitate contact between his current supervisee and his former supervisor. Therefore, Maceina spent the academic year of 1933-1934 at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Fribourg, where he attended the seminars of Šalkauskis’s former supervisor; however, these experiences at Catholic academic centers did not make Maceina the adherent of Neo-Scholasticism.⁷⁹ On the contrary, later Maceina never came back to the profound studies of contemporary neo-scholastic philosophy and started looking for alternatives to it. As we shall see in chapter 4, one may read his accounts on the history of Christian thought from the late 1930s as a conscious subversion of Neo-Scholasticism, as Maceina frequently inferred the superiority of Church Fathers over medieval thinkers.

Despite Maceina’s certain disaffection with Neo-Scholasticism, in his writings on national pedagogy, he followed Šalkauskis’s ideas about Christian-inspired cultural universalism. This was particularly evident in his doctoral dissertation, *Nacional Education (Tautinis auklėjimas, 1934)*, in which he aimed to defend the universalistic aspirations of national culture against the assault of exclusivist nationalism. Maceina asserted that the theory of national education was particularly relevant at the moment when barbarianism was on the rise, pointing out the negative impact that National Socialism had on the understanding of national belonging. Noteworthy, throughout the book Maceina used the term barbarianism exclusively to describe National Socialist ideology. Maceina was clear about its dangers: “Many cultural historians and

⁷⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis to Antanas Maceina, 11 November 1933, in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012), 323-4, here at: 323.

⁷⁹ This view is held by some other scholars as well, see in particular: Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 96. For different interpretation that emphasizes neo-scholastic influence on Maceina’s thinking see Juozas Navickas, “Maceinos filosofijos samprata ir metodas” [The conception and method of Maceina’s philosophy], *Aidai*, 1978, No. 2, 58-64.

philosophers have noted that hypernationalism [*nacionalizmas*] is the greatest danger to the cultured world today. What humanity has achieved in its development – the equality of peoples, international communication, the exchange of cultural values, the fertilization of national creativity, the synthesis of humanity and nationhood – all of that the nationalist movement [*nacionalistinis sąjūdis*] threatens to bury. [...] The ethnocentric life, barbaric within and extremely widespread without, is putting an end to true culture, above all to the European one.”⁸⁰ Moreover, “[h]yperationalism as a practice is militarism and imperialism. The cult of war is the essential part of the nationalist practice.”⁸¹

In his dissertation, Maceina demonstrated the unreserved rejection of racial hierarchies and exclusivist nationalism. At the same time, one must point out that in his writings on national individuality Maceina himself used the category of race. He for example argued that “[m]ixed marriages destroy the distinctness of the ethnic type, and cities destroy its strength. [...] *Encouraging people not to marry foreigners and to love the countryside are therefore the most important means of preserving the national type.*”⁸² However, Maceina did not think that biology determines destiny; for him, such a reduction was unacceptable because of its materialist implications. Just like Šalkauskis, Maceina maintained that every nation had a right to develop its own culture and rejected racial hierarchies.⁸³ Therefore, the surge of racism that he observed in contemporary politics was “the greatest illusion mankind has ever been

⁸⁰ Antanas Maceina, *Tautinis auklėjimas* [National education] (Kaunas: Šv. Kazimiero draugija, 1934), 233.

⁸¹ Ibid., 226.

⁸² Ibid., 123.

⁸³ For discussion on Maceina’s views on nation in his doctoral dissertation see Kęstutis Girmius, “Maceinos *Tautinis auklėjimas*” [National Education by Maceina], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2014, No. 2, 11-2.

deceived with.”⁸⁴ His years abroad coincided with the rise of National Socialism, and even if he did not live in Germany, Maceina followed German philosophical debates, reading influential German Catholic journals, such as *Stimmen der Zeit*, *Der Gral*, and *Pharus*. Among German authors Maceina read Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and Ernst Krieck, an authority in the field of philosophical pedagogy and important supporter of National Socialism; he even read some of the Catholic apologists of Nazism, such as the philosopher and pedagogue Jacob Hommes or the Austrian social theorist Othmar Spann.⁸⁵ His dissertation, as Maceina saw it himself, was the rebuttal of the exclusivist nationalism of National Socialism on the one hand and the affirmation of Šalkauskis’s cultural universalism on the other. Only the right kind of education could prevent the spread of barbarian attitudes and Maceina undertook the task of conceptualizing one.

Maceina provided a vision of national education whose aim was to contribute to developing a universally valuable culture. Using intricate distinctions reminiscent of medieval scholasticism, Maceina distinguished three layers of national education, or *tautinis auklėjimas*: *tautiškas*, *patrijotinis*, and *nacijonalinis*, each of which he connected to a different stage in the evolution of national individuality. Therefore, *tautiškas* education had to develop a sense of national individuality in each person; *patrijotinis* education had to set the right connection between the person and the nation; meanwhile, *nacijonalinis* education aimed at the establishing of conditions in

⁸⁴ Antanas Maceina, “Kristaus gimimas tautai” [The birth of Christ to nation], *Židinys*, 1936, No. 12, 513-28, here at: 526.

⁸⁵ For standard account on German Catholicism around that time see Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, “German Catholicism in 1933: A Critical Examination,” in Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Religion, Law, and Democracy: Selected Writings*, ed. Mirjam Künkler, and Tine Stein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 77-104. German Catholics were far from having a consensus in their views on National Socialism. While many German Catholic thinkers believed that Nazism and Catholicism shared a spiritual affinity and even sought to reconcile the two, others showed no sympathies, arguing against its racist politics, see John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 36-93; Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy. Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 29-32.

which the nation, or *tauta* in Lithuanian, could develop a universally important culture, that is, to become a *nacija*. Maceina asserted that each nation aimed to gain recognition of its cultural advances from other nations.

Following Šalkauskis, Maceina insisted that the fulfillment of the tasks of national education was achieved only when the nation established itself as the creator of universally valuable culture. “National individuality reaches its end only when the organic synthesis of perfect nationality and perfect patriotism [*organiška tobulo tautiškumo ir tobulo patriotizmo sintezė*] manifests itself in a valuable creation when the subjective national form is transferred into objective reality, shaping it in a peculiar way and revealing the essence of the nation in [its] cultural achievements.”⁸⁶ He insisted that the development of a nation’s cultural universalism required national education to prepare the nation for the task of taking part in the wider community of nations on a supranational level. In his telling, *nacija* must not only seek to realize its national vocation, but also “*to take an active part in solving these fundamentally international problems*, without which the life of the whole of humanity and individual nations is impossible, and to which *both national culture and the nation itself* are inclined by their very nature.”⁸⁷ Therefore, universalistic national aspirations implied the pursuit of harmonious relations with other nations.

Maceina proposed the Christian ideal of culture as a solution to the rise of hypernationalism. Knowing the ideas of Nazi ideologists, Maceina insisted that Christianity and ethnocentric nationalism, primarily represented by National Socialism, were two opposing worldviews. Only Christianity, universal by nature, could save from relapse to barbarianism and restore harmony among the nations: “[b]y

⁸⁶ Antanas Maceina, *Tautinis auklėjimas* [National education] (Kaunas: Šv. Kazimiero draugija, 1934), 76.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 270.

its demand to love all nations [*visas tautas*] as one's own, it can save the world from the imperialist pursuits of nationalism [*nuo imperialistinių nacionalizmo užsimojimų*] that threaten with global war and murder.”⁸⁸ Following his supervisor, Maceina inferred that Christianity provided a certain moral code, which, if shared among the nations, created a well-ordered community of nations. “In Christianity, nationality [*tautiškumas*] becomes a real support for the friendship of mankind, and patriotism becomes a real support for the love of humanity.”⁸⁹ Therefore, the rise of barbarian tendencies in European politics could be prevented by making Christian teachings the foundation of national aspirations. “Salvation from this universal chaos will only be possible when the love of the fatherland is restored to the service of universal ideals, when it becomes a source of compassion and mercy rather than a source of egoism and hatred, and when it is consecrated [*pašvęsta*].”⁹⁰

Writing at a frantic pace, Maceina defended his doctoral thesis in October 1934, completing it in just two years. In the thesis on *National Education*, which became his first book, Maceina followed his supervisor's understanding of national belonging. It is no surprise that Šalkauskis evaluated Maceina's dissertation as a successful rendition of the Christian conception of national individuality. In his letter to the Board of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences, Šalkauskis summarized the achievement of Maceina's dissertation as follows:

In Maceina's dissertation, the issue of national education [*tautinio auklėjimo klausimas*] is examined in the light of a wide national worldview and in agreement with Christian doctrine. Such relevant things as nationality [*tautybė*], homeland, [and] patriotism find in it a very positive and interesting explanation in connection with the current rise of nationalism [*nacionalizmo*]. The author appreciates all these things of national life [*tautinio gyvenimo*], but at the same time [he] avoids extreme nationalism [*kraštutinio nacionalizmo*], which cannot be reconciled with the Christian worldview.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 238.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 233.

Therefore, the whole national education in the dissertation is built in connection with religious life.⁹¹

Therefore, Šalkauskis endorsed Maceina's dissertation as an innovative contribution to the field of national education, recommending it to be published as a book and even translated into foreign languages – it “can occupy an honorable place not only in our pedagogical-societal literature but also among the nations of W[estern] Europe, which have much richer literature.”⁹²

The years abroad were important for Maceina's later intellectual development, because during this time he moved away from Neo-Scholasticism in search of new ways how to revitalize Christianity. He came to believe that to reach out to the unbelieving masses, Catholic philosophers needed to find a new approach to God; the old methods of scholastic philosophers who based their arguments solely on reason and logic could not persuade the contemporary man to come back to Christian belief.⁹³ While studying abroad, he was primarily interested in the subject of his dissertation, mostly reading works and choosing classes related to pedagogy; at the same time, he found time for other authors: in Leuven for example he studied carefully Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, which he read in French.⁹⁴ During these years Maceina became interested in philosophy of religion and even came to notice the growing popularity of phenomenology, which attracted his attention primarily as a possible approach to studying religious experience.⁹⁵ Already in 1930, Maceina

⁹¹ Stasys Šalkauskis to the Board of Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences, 15 June 1934, Box 140, Folder 116, Stasys Šalkauskis fund, the Manuscripts Reading Room of Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Antanas Maceina, “Dievo ieškojimas” [The search for God], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 13-14, 290-4.

⁹⁴ Tatjana Maceinienė, *Pašauktas kūrybai: Antanas Maceina – Filosofo asmenybės interpretacija* [Called to create: Antanas Maceina – the interpretation of philosopher's personality] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2000), 59-60.

⁹⁵ While being abroad, Maceina discussed this topic with Šalkauskis in his letter, written in the late 1932, which did not survive to our day. We can deduce some of the problems that Maceina was interested in only from the answer coming to him from Šalkauskis: “I completely agree that it is very

translated into Lithuanian a small treatise entitled *Eucharistie und Arbeit* (1917) by Erich Przywara, whom Maceina valued because of the German Jesuit theologian's anthropological perspective in his inquiry on the relationship between man and God; while studying abroad Maceina added the Russian thinker Nicolas Berdyaev among his intellectual heroes as well, apparently for the same reason.⁹⁶ Maceina greeted a certain anthropological turn in contemporary philosophy, in which the lived experience of man was made into the point of departure for further philosophizing.⁹⁷ This attention to philosophical anthropology anticipated Maceina's later interest in the writings of Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers from the late 1940s onward when he developed a version of Christian existentialism.⁹⁸ The emphasis on lived experience and subjectivity became central to the young Maceina's thinking and provided an important stimulus for his philosophy of culture that he developed after coming back to Lithuania in the autumn of 1935.

useful for You to delve into the problem of philosophy of religion, because it has leading and concluding meaning in philosophy of life. [...] I could not tell now You exactly whether the understanding of the phenomenology of religion as a study of religious sentiment is correct. I need to delve deeper into the current state of philosophy of religion, which I cannot do in the meantime. On this occasion, I would like to entice You to J[oseph] Geyser's work in this field. He responds vividly to both R[udolf] Otto's and M[ax] Scheler's research on the religious problem," Stasys Šalkauskis to Antanas Maceina, 22 December 1932, in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012), 313-5, here at: 314. Interestingly, Maceina expressed certain disappointment that contemporary Catholic philosophers did not give proper attention to the problems of religion and culture. Šalkauskis agreed with this observation: "Your doubts about the contemporary handling of philosophy of religion and philosophy of culture are not foreign to me – I have always wondered why Catholic philosophers, having in their arsenal the concept of Aristotelian causes, do not use it for the handling of these disciplines, [but instead] sink into ambiguities, and do not provide a coherent system," Stasys Šalkauskis to Antanas Maceina, 20 February 1933, in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012), 315-20, here at: 316.

⁹⁶ For Maceina's translation see Erich Przywara, *Eucharistija ir darbas* (Marijampolė: Šešupės knygynas, 1930). For Maceina's phrase of Przywara see Antanas Maceina, "Dabarties filosofijos keliai" [The paths of contemporary philosophy], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 12, 286-7. Maceina gave particular attention to Berdyaev in his study on philosophy of culture and frequently came back to his ideas throughout the interwar period, see Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [Introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 42-51.

⁹⁷ Cf. Friedrich Seifert, "Zum Verständnis der anthropologischen Wende in der Philosophie," *Blätter für Deutsche Philosophie* 8 (1934-35): 393-410.

⁹⁸ Antanas Maceina, *Jobo drama: Žmogiškosios būties apmąstymas* [The drama of Job: Reflection on human existence] (Schweinfurt: Venta, 1950).

For our purposes, it is important to point out the importance of Berdyaev's philosophy on Maceina's thinking. This influence was largely absent from his doctoral dissertation on national education, however, was key to his later conceptualizations of culture. Inspired by this Russian thinker, Maceina came to believe that all the manifestations of social and political life were the results of spiritual life. To make this point in one of his 1936 essays Maceina approvingly quoted Berdyaev: "events first mature in the reality of the spirit, and only then appear in the reality of history."⁹⁹ Thus, following Berdyaev, Maceina asserted that the human spirit created ideas that received their subsequent applications in particular historical forms. We shall come back to this idea later in this chapter, in the discussion on Maceina's philosophy of culture, but for now, it is necessary to emphasize that in his later analyses of social and political life Maceina elevated this primacy of the spiritual life into the methodological principle.

Simultaneously with the discovery of new philosophical trends, Maceina became fascinated with a movement for liturgical renewal. Its practitioners promoted community masses as a significant part of spiritual life, encouraging the active participation of believers in the mass. In Leuven, he found this practice among the Benedictines, whose order was known for the introduction of changes in liturgical practice and a new liturgical theology in Germany.¹⁰⁰ The new liturgical practice impressed Maceina because of its emphasis on corporeal and emotional elements. He explained in an essay written in Leuven that the main aim of new devotional forms,

⁹⁹ Antanas Maceina, "Korporacinės idėjos aktualumas" [The relevance of the corporatist idea], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1936, No. 12, 289-94, here at: 290n1. He did not provide the source of this quotation.

¹⁰⁰ The key figure in German liturgical renewal was Romano Guardini, whose *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1918) influenced many German Catholic theologians, see Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 131-4. For Guardini's ideas in the context of the interwar period see Paul Silas Peterson, "Romano Guardini in the Weimar Republic and in National Socialist Germany: With a Brief Look into the National Socialist Correspondences on Guardini in the early 1940s," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 26 (1) (2019): 47-96.

including the revival of Gregorian chanting, was to allow all the worshipers to be more involved in the mass. As he asserted, “*in the liturgy it [e.g., the liturgical movement] wants to emphasize man as a member of the community.*”¹⁰¹ Maceina claimed that the new liturgy connected believers with the priest, opening the way for a more vivid religious experience. “All of these things, let they do not fundamentally change the Roman ritual, make it easier for people to understand the meaning of liturgical actions and the liturgical thought in general.”¹⁰² Therefore, just like in his philosophical interests, in his religious leanings Maceina looked for the element of personal experience in the search for God.

By the mid-1930s, Maceina was already established among the leading Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania. As a talented thinker, Maceina quickly moved upwards through the academic rankings at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas. In 1934, he defended his doctoral dissertation on *National Education (Tautinis auklėjimas)* and in 1935, following an academic year spent at the University of Strasbourg, his habilitation work on *Educational Action (Ugdomasis veikimas)*, which was never published and now is lost, entitling him to teach at the university level. Therefore, after coming back from abroad Maceina started the academic year of 1935-1936 as a *Privatdozent* with a teaching position in pedagogy and its history at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, taking over the teaching of courses on research methodology and philosophy of culture, both of which until that moment were taught exclusively by Šalkauskis, and, somewhat later, a course on the history of pedagogy.¹⁰³ Moreover, Maceina was a prolific writer. He contributed

¹⁰¹ Antanas Maceina, “Iš Vakarų Europos” [From Western Europe], *Ateitis*, 1932, No. 11, 539-45, here at: 542.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 544.

¹⁰³ Antanas Maceina to Stasys Yla, 4 March 1973, in Antanas Maceina and Stasys Yla, “Idėjų ir širdžių sąsajos: Antano Maceinos ir Stasio Ylos laišakai” [The links between ideas and hearts: The

numerous articles to all the most important Catholic outlets in Lithuania, becoming a well-known Catholic publicist. Besides writing his doctoral thesis and habilitation, during the rest of the interwar years Maceina published four more books: *The Introduction to Philosophy of Culture* (*Kultūros filosofijos įvadas*, 1936), *Social Justice* (*Socijalinis teisingumas*, 1938), *The History of Pedagogy* (*Pedagogikos istorija*, 1939), and *The Downfall of the Bourgeoisie* (*Buržuazijos žlugimas*, 1940). As the trajectory of his academic career indicates, Maceina was set to replace Šalkauskis once he decided to retire. Because of his role as the heir of Šalkauskis's philosophical legacy and the most prominent *Kulturphilosoph* of his generation, it is necessary to explore Maceina's writings on philosophy of culture, in which he provided a new interpretation of his teacher's ideas.

2. 5. Culture as Human Creation in Maceina's Philosophy

In his own philosophical writings about culture, as we shall see, Maceina updated Šalkauskis's philosophical project by incorporating into it the ideas of the philosophical anthropology that he discovered while he was studying abroad. In 1936, Maceina published his second book entitled *The Introduction to Philosophy of Culture*, in which he gave his most extensive account of philosophy of culture. The book is all the more important because Maceina presented it first as lectures in the course on philosophy of culture that he taught; thus, it allows us to find out what ideas Maceina passed to the young students of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Maceina even asserted that ever since the course on philosophy of culture was first introduced to the curriculum, its major aim was to help the students "orientate

correspondence between Antanas Maceina and Stasys Yla], ed. Gediminas Mikelaitis, *Metai*, 2008, No. 8-9, 131-52, here at: 135.

themselves in the labyrinths of intricate modern culture, to help them to obtain correct views on the cultural life of humanity and prepare to consciously participate in the creation of that [e.g., cultural] life.”¹⁰⁴

Just like Šalkauskis, Maceina insisted on the inherent connection between philosophy of culture and the temporal crisis of modernity. He maintained that the emergence of the discipline must be attributed to the fact that for modern man culture has become a problem. There was no philosophy of culture in either Antiquity or the Middle Ages, although both historical periods were distinguished by great cultural achievements. Culture was not a problem for the people of those times. His conceptualization of the emergence of philosophy of culture rested on the distinction between *Naturwelt* and *Kulturwelt* adopted from the German traditions of *Kulturphilosophie*: “As long as culture is young and fertile, one neither thinks about it nor wants to think about it, because for the man it is not a problem. Culture becomes a problem only when there is a division between man and his created things, when these things become foreign to man and even [revolt] against him when their development reveals its own logic and goes in a direction that man did not even think about at first. Then appears the crisis of culture, and then philosophy of culture also emerges.”¹⁰⁵ The Enlightenment ushered in a profound cultural crisis, Maceina explained, that had never been resolved. Elsewhere he stated: “The world of our days is no longer a natural world but a *cultural* world (*Kulturwelt*).”¹⁰⁶ In other words, Maceina believed that the emergence of philosophy of culture was a sign that the moderns began to problematize their relationship with the world that they created. Thus, philosophy of culture was a

¹⁰⁴ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [Introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 7.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰⁶ Antanas Maceina, “Dabarties filosofijos keliai” [The paths of contemporary philosophy], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 11, 259-60, here at 259.

modern philosophical discipline that was invented to reflect on this problematic condition.

Believing that European modernity was in crisis, Maceina suggested that the First World War in particular problematized the understanding of culture. This only further indicated the increased relevance of philosophy of culture in the contemporary period: “the shaken life of the post-war brought the problem of culture into the center of European thought and philosophy of culture has become the favorite discipline of philosophy of life.”¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere he put it even more clearly: “The beginning of the 20th century has brought a storm like no other in Europe. Today, it is quite clear that the Great War was not a war in a simple sense. It was a faltering of the very foundations of culture.”¹⁰⁸ Following Šalkauskis, the young Lithuanian *Kulturphilosoph* contended that the First World War introduced a caesura in European cultural history, leaving the continent in spiritual disarray.

Maceina’s understanding of the state of European culture becomes particularly evident from his relationship with the ideas of the historian Oswald Spengler, of whom Maceina was an avid reader. Maceina repeatedly asserted that the mood of exhaustion felt throughout contemporary Europe was captured by the *Kulturpessimismus* of Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918). In his essay written to commemorate Spengler’s death in 1936, Maceina explained: “*Insofar as the idea of the collapse of the West is a creature of Spenglerian philosophy of culture, it is dead today,*” nonetheless, “*we can look at it as a characteristic of the direction of European*

¹⁰⁷ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 7.

¹⁰⁸ Antanas Maceina, “Prometėjizmo problema” [The problem of Prometheanism], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1938, No. 42, 793-5, here at: 795.

cultural life. And here many agree with Spengler.”¹⁰⁹ Despite being an enthusiastic reader of Spengler, he did not subscribe to the view that the decline of European culture was inevitable, as the German master seemed to suggest by his organicist conception of cultures’ growth and decay; however, the young Lithuanian philosopher contended that it certainly necessitated renewal. There Maceina represented the general assumption of interwar Lithuanian philosophers of culture that their ultimate goal was to find the “solution” to this crisis of culture. They had to offer a version of modernity devoid of the destructive impact of modernization.

Despite the asserted relevance of philosophy of culture, Maceina observed that the majority of modern neo-scholastic philosophers paid little attention to culture and there was no tradition of philosophy of culture among European Catholic intellectuals. Moreover, he emphasized that there was no scholastic philosophy of culture in the medieval period. Therefore, Maceina described the study by the prominent German theologian and historian of medieval philosophy Martin Grabmann on Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy of culture as a “misunderstanding” (*nesusipratimas*), explaining that “human creation was not a problem for the Middle Ages, and therefore there was no philosophy of culture at the time.”¹¹⁰ Maceina asserted that Aquinas had no understanding of the creative aspect of man’s interaction with the world, on this point agreeing with Berdyaev, who suggested that in Thomism “man is regarded as an insignificant being, possessing neither real freedom nor creative capacities; he is a

¹⁰⁹ Antanas Maceina, “Osvaldo Spenglerio palikimas” [The legacy of Oswald Spengler], *Židinys*, 1936, No. 8-9, 126-40.

¹¹⁰ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 17. For Grabmann’s account on Aquinas see Martin Grabmann, *Die Kulturphilosophie des hl. Thomas v. Aquin* (Augsburg, 1925).

second-rate being.”¹¹¹ This meant that the Catholic tradition of philosophy of culture was yet to be developed.

In Maceina’s view, only a handful of Catholic thinkers contributed to solving the problems of culture. Among them, he recognized Jacques Maritain, whose 1930 essay *Religion and Culture* Maceina credited as the first attempt to develop a “purely Thomist” philosophy of culture. However, even Maritain, Maceina contended, did not touch on the problem of the essence of culture: the French philosopher remained too close to Aquinas.¹¹² Another exception was Šalkauskis, whom Maceina acknowledged as the creator of this philosophical discipline in Lithuania and the most original philosopher of culture: “prof. Šalkauskis’s cultural concepts are the most interesting and original of all concepts. In the history of philosophy of culture, one cannot pass them in silence.”¹¹³ Recognizing a great value in his teacher’s philosophical reflections, Maceina described himself as a follower of Šalkauskis’s school of philosophy of culture. In the foreword of his book, he noted that “my concepts in the field of philosophy of culture have grown out of Prof. Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture. Prof. Šalkauskis’s philosophy of life was the primary one that led me to my current path. Therefore, I also look at this work as the continuation of Prof. Šalkauskis’s cultural-philosophical work.”¹¹⁴ Subscribing to the ideas of his teacher, Maceina even dedicated his book on philosophy of culture to the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of Šalkauskis. Not only he recognized the value of Šalkauskis’s contributions, but Maceina also asserted that if in Lithuania the discipline would

¹¹¹ Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1935), 39. For the same point in Maceina see Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 102-3.

¹¹² Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 32-3.

¹¹³ Ibid., 52.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

continue to grow, it would undoubtedly become an original contribution to European philosophical life.

It was certainly true that Maceina took over some of the concepts and problems developed by his teacher, however, reflecting on culture Maceina shifted the emphasis first and foremost on man, especially on his creativity. Maceina approached culture from the perspective of philosophical anthropology. Therefore, Maceina did not concern himself with the problems of wider civilizational progress, which interested Šalkauskis; rather, he addressed the problems of culture through their relevance to man. Maceina put it clearly that the essence of culture lay in the subjectivity of man; man was the source of objective reality: “Man is first and foremost a creative being. [...] *Man’s creativity is the primary principle [pradas] of his being, in which lie all other principles.* The creative nature of man is that element which connects man with God and which makes man a special creature throughout the cosmos.”¹¹⁵ He gave his most comprehensive take on philosophy of culture in a special “Supplement” to his book *The Introduction to Philosophy of Culture*, which was tellingly entitled “Culture as Human Creation.” In short, as we shall see, Maceina’s philosophy of culture might be better understood as the philosophy of creation.¹¹⁶

Emphasizing the centrality of man to his philosophy of culture, Maceina claimed the continuity of his philosophical project with Christian anthropology, which, according to him, “is the only one that is capable to explain the human problem.”¹¹⁷ He insisted that Christian anthropology acknowledged creativity as the central characteristic of human nature: “for Christian anthropology man in the first place is not a rational

¹¹⁵ Antanas Maceina, “Buržuazinės dvasios kultūra” [The culture of the bourgeois spirit], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 51-52, 948.

¹¹⁶ This point was noted already by Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 428.

¹¹⁷ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [Introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 184.

being, not a social animal, but *first and foremost human is a creative being*. Man is the creator. Human's creativity is his main feature."¹¹⁸ All the other features, he insisted, were derivative. Therefore, by developing his philosophy of culture Maceina implied that he was a continuer of the Christian tradition of the understanding of man, only unlocking its philosophical potential. However, by defining human as creative being Maceina consciously distanced himself from the neo-scholastic emphasis on rationality as the *differentia specifica* of human.

In his philosophy of culture, Maceina asserted the primacy of the spiritual. In this respect, his views on culture were strongly influenced by his reading of Berdyaev, whom Maceina regarded as the only philosopher who provided an extensive account of culture as human's creation.¹¹⁹ In his book *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, which was originally published in Russian in 1916 and translated into German in 1927, and Maceina read this German edition, Berdyaev undertook the task of the "justification" of human existence, finding it in human creation: "Many have written their justification of God, their theodicy. But the time has come to write a justification of man, an anthropodicy. [...] The book of mine is an essay on anthropodicy by means of creativeness."¹²⁰ In his book, Berdyaev called for a new epoch of creativity in human history, which would overcome the present crisis of culture. His philosophy was characterized by a dualism between the spirit and the world, therefore: "The whole orientation of life must turn from without to within. And everything must be finally comprehended as a mystery of the spirit, as one of its stages on the eternal way. Everything what is external, material, everything of the object, is only a symbol of

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 77-8.

¹²⁰ Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 18-9.

what is taking place in the depth of the spirit, in man.”¹²¹ Inspired by Berdyaev, Maceina asserted that culture was the “objectivization” of human spirit. According to him, “*the most important creative process takes place in the depths of the spirit when ideas arise*. Meanwhile, these ideas do not arise from the matter, but from the non-existence. They are not derived from real potency in the act, but they are created from non-existence and only subsequently realized in the matter as [their] material support.”¹²² Through the creative act, man brought into the world something that did not exist in it before.

By emphasizing the importance of the spiritual, Maceina modified Šalkauskis’s understanding of the creative act. Taking over the idea of *productio rei ex nihilo sui et subiecti* from neo-scholastic natural philosophy, which had its origins in the writings of Augustine of Hippo and was used to explain divine creation, Maceina applied it to conceptualize human creativity. In a similar token to neo-scholastics, which described divine creation as bringing out of nothingness ontologically new object as a whole, both its form (*nihilum sui*) and matter (*nihilum subiecti*), Maceina argued that human creativity was characterized by bringing into the world new form of out nothingness (*nihilum sui*).¹²³ Despite the apparent difference, as human creation required pre-existing matter, Maceina regarded both divine creation and human creation as a creation out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. Therefore, he asserted that “[t]he deepest essence of human creation is its *originality* or the production of new thing *as such* (*productio rei*

¹²¹ Ibid., 19. For a summary of Berdyaev’s main ideas see Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy, Volume 10: Russian Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006), 371-9. For Berdyaev’s account on creativity see David Bonner Richardson, *Berdyaev’s Philosophy of History: An Existentialist Theory of Social Creativity and Eschatology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968).

¹²² Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 176.

¹²³ On divine creation in Augustine of Hippo see Simo Knuuttila, “Time and creation in Augustine,” *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 103-15.

ex nihilo sui). This at the same time is the essence of culture.”¹²⁴ In his account, nature never gave forms to culture, they were born only out of the spirit of the human being. By stressing the aspect of formation, as Arūnas Sverdiolas rightfully pointed out, Maceina departed away from the neo-scholastic assumptions of Šalkauskis’s philosophy, who used Aristotelian four causes to understand change, to reach “simply anti-Thomist conclusions” that the central element to the act of creation was the spiritual, out of which new ideas arise. Maceina believed that the allegiance to the principles of hylomorphism, characteristic to both neo-Thomist natural philosophy and Šalkauskis’s account of philosophy of culture, would limit the possibilities of philosophical reflection on culture.¹²⁵ This understanding of creative activity as the capacity of the spirit to originate new ideas and then shape the objective reality was central to Maceina’s understanding of culture.

In his reflections on the essence of the culture, Maceina asserted that the act of creation was an attempt to overcome the dualism between man and the world. Culture was a synthesis of subject and object, of spirit and nature:

*Cultural creation, as the objectification of the spirit, is nothing else than the incarnation of the subjective individual spirit in certain visible forms. What was hitherto only within man, what lived within him only as an idea, as a conception [sumanymas] and a desire, now takes on a visible body, manifests itself in certain concrete forms, and crystallizes itself in certain shapes. [...] This exit of the spirit from itself and its entrance into the object or into nature is precisely what accomplishes this, at least imperfect, synthesis between subject and object, between spirit and nature. In the objective thing, or in the work of art, the spirit dwells in all its signs and in its very essence. Whether we take art, science, language, or technology, we find the human spirit living everywhere, and at the same time these objective, [and] spiritualized forms. The products of cultural creativity are that third element for which both nature and spirit yearning. It is the aspiration towards which the whole course of history follows.*¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 79.

¹²⁵ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 97-100.

¹²⁶ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 203-4.

The synthesis of spirit and nature resulted in the emergence of the third element, that is, culture, which was not identical either to subjective spirit or to a pure object. Some scholars even suggested that this idea of unity between subject and object, which was supposedly made through the creative act, was the most original conceptual innovation made by Lithuanian Catholic philosophers of culture.¹²⁷ For our purposes, it is important to stress that Maceina understood history as a continuous process of the “objectivization” of the human spirit that “spiritualized” nature, because this understanding shaped his perception of contemporary social and political realities.

For Maceina, creation was both an original and individual act. At the same time, as a Christian philosopher, he maintained that human creation was complementary to divine creation, interpreting it as a human’s participation in the divine transfiguration of the world. Culture was only the first step towards the unity of spirit with nature; only through religion this unity could be accomplished to the full extent: “culture cannot completely spiritualize nature. In culture, natural objects always remain natural, hence without having perfectly reached their original idea [*pirmavaizdžio*]. Only *religion* can completely spiritualize nature, because only *religious forms become the substantive forms of natural objects*. Cultural forms, on the other hand, are only contingent [*atsitiktinės*] or accidental forms.”¹²⁸ In other words, because it was created by human, culture was insufficient on itself, and thus needed to be completed by God; only God could make human creations complete by finishing the synthesis of object and subject, of spirit and nature that human had begun. While Maceina did not state it explicitly, this idea that culture necessitated religious grounding implied that only

¹²⁷ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 104; Dalius Jonkus, “Kultūros samprata Antano Maceinos filosofijoje ir kultūros fenomenologijos galimybės” [The notion of culture in philosophy of Antanas Maceina and possibilities of the phenomenology of culture], *Soter* 14 (42) (2004): 87-99, here at: 91.

¹²⁸ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 205.

theocentric worldviews corresponded to the ontological essence of culture and therefore only they could solve the crisis of European culture. This was the conclusion that the students of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy may have drawn after attending Maceina's lectures on philosophy of culture.

By stressing the centrality of the spiritual to the creation of culture, Maceina developed a voluntarist and anti-rationalist approach to cultural and social activities. In his inaugural lecture in the autumn of 1935 Maceina asserted that “creation is essentially *autonomous*. No foreign will, let it be of God, can be imposed on the creator. [...] The essence of the creative process is the submission of external reality to the inner idea of man and its [e.g., external reality's] transformation according to this idea. [...] The external world is ever more conceding to the inner world and is ever more shaped by the forms that are desired by man, that are born out of his creative fantasy.”¹²⁹ In his philosophy of culture, Maceina championed human freedom. Unsurprisingly, naturalistic interpretations of history, which he identified with the writings of Giambattista Vico, Leo Frobenius, and Oswald Spengler, all of whom, he argued, regarded the development of culture as subject to certain natural determinism and therefore independent from man's own will, remained alien to Maceina's thought.¹³⁰ In his interpretation, all the manifestations of culture were the outcomes of the human spiritual capacity to willfully form material reality. Creation was the “objectification” of the spirit and the realization of values. He asserted that “[e]xternal

¹²⁹ Antanas Maceina, “Prometėjizmo persvara dabarties kultūroje” [The predominance of prometheanism in contemporary culture], *Židinys*, 1935, No. 8-9, 138-53, here at: 145.

¹³⁰ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 33-42.

events are only a manifestation of inner events. Before revolution takes place in the state, it has already happened in the spirit.”¹³¹

Perhaps most importantly, with this concept of creativity, Maceina suggested that the future of the cultural world depended on the will of those who created it. Maceina was clear that the creation of culture was a strife among different moral-psychological, or in his own words “spiritual,” dispositions for domination within and without, and therefore was connected with a certain sense of responsibility: “Man is responsible for the destiny of the world [...]. He can create the conditions for a new heaven and a new earth, but he can also ruin the earth. Natural reality and the whole cultural process is a struggle between the real creators and the spoilers of the cosmos. Now this struggle is hidden. It takes place in the depths of being. But at the end of times, it will come to the surface, and then the man will show all his tragedy and all his bliss.”¹³² This understanding of the cultural sphere as the place in which different moral-psychological dispositions clashed for supremacy informed Maceina’s later social and political thinking. He believed that the analysis of objective reality could reveal the spiritual structure that created it, because the creator left the mark of one’s individuality on the things that one created: “*if culture is a human creation, then in this creation the creator reveals his spiritual inner structure. [...]* The cultural forms that are realized contain the structure of the human spirit, the tendencies of the human spirit, its worldview, its disposition, in a word, *they contain the whole of the man-creator.*”¹³³

¹³¹ Ibid., 159.

¹³² Ibid., 214.

¹³³ Antanas Maceina, “Kultūros sintezė ir lietuviškoji kultūra” [Cultural synthesis and Lithuanian culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991), 403.

By conceptualizing history as a continuous formation that depended on man's self-determination to give it a certain form, Maceina gave philosophical substance to Catholic anti-materialism. There he extensively drew on Berdyaev's personalism, which became Maceina's inspiration in his conceptualization of culture as the "objectivization" of man's spirit. At the same time, in his emphasis on man's will to shape external reality according to one's own "creative fantasy" he captured the urgency of Catholics to act according to their principles, which was apparent in the moment of spiritual crisis, as many Catholic thinkers conceptualized the contemporary developments in European culture and politics. As we shall see in chapter 4, Maceina's developed philosophy of culture was part of the wider effort of Catholic thinkers to counter the perceived crisis of European modernity by suggesting a certain religious spiritual renewal.

2. 6. The Young Catholic Intellectuals and National Culture

The academic and intellectual itineraries of Keliuotis, Dielininkaitis, and Maceina reflected a broader orientation of Lithuanian intellectuals towards Western Europe. Just like them, other Catholic intellectuals too traveled abroad to write their doctoral dissertations: to mention but a few more prominent examples, the literary scholar Ambrazevičius studied in Bonn, the literary scholar Grinius in Paris and Grenoble, the historian Ivinskis in Munich and Berlin, the literary scholar Skrupskelis in Königsberg and Vienna, while the philosopher Pranas Mantvydas (1894–1960) in Paris, Munich, Cologne and Leuven, and the psychologist Jonas Pankauskas (1904–1999) in Leipzig. The fact that they received their education in the West became an important mark of self-identification for the members of this generation and was recalled in their later

accounts of shared generational experiences.¹³⁴ Remarkably, their training left very few traces of Neo-Scholasticism, although they retained their teachers' trust in the superiority of Christianity over secular ideologies. After specializing abroad, the young Catholic intellectuals were coming back to Lithuania. Some of them received appointments at the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology, while others had to look for other career possibilities. Many of them remained active as intellectuals writing in cultural press. Mostly interested in practical problems, they paid little attention to the theoretical problems of philosophy; however, the nation and its culture remained at the center of their attention.

In their research, many young Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals paid particular attention to the questions of Lithuanian peculiarity, frequently using their findings to support national advancement. As we have seen, in his doctoral dissertation on national education Maceina asserted the superiority of Šalkauskis's cultural universalism, while Dielininkaitis developed Šalkauskis's idea of cultural autonomy. One may notice similar cases among other young Catholic intellectuals as well. The literary scholar Ambrazevičius, who with his Catholic colleagues co-authored a textbook for schools on the universal history of literature, studied Lithuanian folklore searching for the manifestations of Lithuanian national genius.¹³⁵ Another student of Šalkauskis, Skrupskelis, wrote his doctoral dissertation on the image of Lithuanians in eighteen-century German literature, in which he argued that the German philosophers Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Georg Hamann reconciled allegiance to one's nation with the appreciation of the cultural particularities of other nations. In this way,

¹³⁴ For example, in 1949 Maceina described his generation as follows: "What is happening today in exile is only a continuation of what began in Lithuania around 1933, when young people who had studied in the West began to join the religious-cultural life of our nation." Antanas Maceina to Pranciškus Juras, 18 January 1949, *Antano Maceinos laišakai prel. Pranciškui Jurui* ed. Antanas Liuima (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1997), 25.

¹³⁵ Juozas Ambrazevičius, "Savęs beiškant tautosakoje" [In search of ourselves in folklore], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 10-11, 263.

his argument went, they created a counterweight to German militarism of the eighteenth century and simultaneously contributed to the development of Lithuanian culture in East Prussia. Defended in 1932, the dissertation contributed to research on the history of Lithuanian literature; however, one may also read it as a response to the rise of exclusivist nationalism in Germany, where Skrupskelis spent time studying and collecting materials in archives and libraries.¹³⁶ Similarly, in his inaugural lecture of 1933 the historian Ivinskis, who specialized in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century history of Lithuania, observed that Lithuanian contacts with Western Europe, and the faster westernization of Lithuania that could have accompanied them, were halted by the arrival of the Teutonic Order to the shores of the Baltic Sea; the militarism of their state prevented medieval Lithuania from the integration into Christian West.¹³⁷ The young generation of Catholic intellectuals shared with Šalkauskis eagerness to uplift the level of national culture and make it from minor to major one.¹³⁸ They all agreed that the main task for Lithuanian culture was to modernize, consciously seeking to become one of humanity's most "advanced" nations. In the mid-1930s these thinkers to large extent shaped the national discourse in Lithuania.

After returning from abroad, young Catholic intellectuals joined the vibrant cultural life of Kaunas, siding with Keliuotis and his *Naujoji Romuva* group of artists and writers in their attempts to advance Lithuanian national culture. As the chief editor of the journal, Keliuotis asserted that "[w]hat is needed now is the same idealism that

¹³⁶ Ignas Skrupskelis, *Lietuviai XVIII amžiaus vokiečių literatūroje* [Lithuanians in the 18th century German literature] (Roma: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1967).

¹³⁷ Zenonas Ivinskis, "Krikščioniškosios Vakarų Europos santykiai su pagoniškąja Lietuva" [The relations between Christian Western Europe and pagan Lithuania], *Athenaeum* (1933): 135-44.

¹³⁸ Jolita Mulevičiūtė, *Modernizmo link: Dailės gyvenimas Lietuvos Respublikoje 1918-1940* [Towards modernism: Art life in the Republic of Lithuania, 1918-1940] (Kaunas: Kultūros ir meno institutas, 2001).

was in the first years of independence.”¹³⁹ As he saw, “the youth will unify all areas of our lives, because it is deeply nationally conscious [*giliai tautiška*] [...]. It is self-confident, it proclaims that Lithuanians themselves must decide their own destiny, choose their own values and take charge of themselves in all the spheres [of life].”¹⁴⁰ The young generation of Lithuanian intellectuals had to pursue a moral and cultural renewal, even a certain spiritual revolution: “youth will have to make a spiritual revolution, create a new type of Lithuanian, [and] develop a free and independent personality. [...] Neither Soviet statism nor Hitler’s militarism is suitable for us;” Lithuanians had to seek a certain universalism: “bright and creative humanity will be the real Lithuanian way and the real mission of Lithuanian youth.”¹⁴¹

Following Šalkauskis, in the early 1930s young Catholic intellectuals focused on cultural and social issues without subscribing to the logic of party politics; most of them rejected identification even with the Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party, and this cleavage will be discussed in chapter 3. Tellingly, Maceina opened one of his 1930 articles by asserting that *mes nepolitikavome, nepolitikuojame ir nepolitikuosime*, which roughly translates as “we did not politick, do not politick and will not politick.” For them, the word “politicking,” the English rendering of Lithuanian *politikuoti*, had negative connotations, which indicated distrust of party politics, a widespread feeling among the young Catholic generation in Lithuania. Maceina spoke in the name of the whole generation when he proclaimed, “[w]e are not interested in any party politics.”¹⁴² In this view, which was shared by many, culture and politics were radically opposed spheres of life. This dissociation from

¹³⁹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Penkiolika laisvo gyvenimo metų” [Fifteen years of life in freedom], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933, No. 111, 145.

¹⁴⁰ “Lietuvių jaunuomenės misija, (NR surengtas pasitarimas)” [The mission of Lithuanian youth (the meeting of NR)], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1934, No. 166, 235-6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Antanas Maceina, “Dabartiniai mūsų rūpesčiai” [Our current concerns], *Ateitis*, 1930, No. 11, 449-51, here at: 449.

politics only meant that Catholics must direct their efforts towards social and cultural advancement. Maceina continued, “We are humans, we are citizens, we are Lithuanians! We need to know the most important laws of human coexistence and cooperation, we need to know the order of our current society and the affairs of our people.”¹⁴³ A similar view was expressed by Keliuotis, in this autobiography written decades later: “I did not, in principle, feel obliged to fight against any of the parties that existed at that time, but I did not feel any sympathy for any of them either. My political position was neither on the right nor on the left, not even in the middle. I lived and acted on a completely different platform. First of all, despite all the differences in political views, we were all Lithuanians. So I felt called to cultivate what unites all of us Lithuanians into one family, not what divides us. And what unites us all is Lithuanian culture [...]”¹⁴⁴ In the first half of the 1930s, many young Catholic intellectuals distanced their activism from party politics.

The young generation accommodated their indifference to party politics into a worldview in which culture ranked higher than politics. In the editorial policies of *Naujoji Romuva*, Keliuotis refused to follow the Christian Democrat party line, emphasizing the cultural orientation of the journal. He asserted that *Naujoji Romuva* was impartial towards every social group and political party. Incidentally, the launch of this journal was welcomed by President Antanas Smetona, who personally expressed his support for the initiative in the open letter that was published in the first edition of *Naujoji Romuva*.¹⁴⁵ This was a significant gesture towards Catholic initiative, as during the early 1930s the relationship between the Church and the

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Juozas Keliuotis, “Atsiminimai apie F. Kiršą” [Reminiscences on Kirša], *Tekstai*, accessed on July 15, 2022, <http://www.tekstai.lt/tekstu-naujienos/7550-juozas-keliuotis-apie-fausta-kirsa>.

¹⁴⁵ Antanas Smetona, “Jo ekselencija Respublikos Prezidentas apie *Naujosios Romuvos* uždavinį” [His excellency the President of the Republic on the tasks of *Naujoji Romuva*], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 1, 1.

authoritarian regime was particularly strained.¹⁴⁶ In his articles, Keliuotis was clear that culture had a higher value than politics and, therefore, *Naujoji Romuva* had to remain above any party politics.¹⁴⁷ The whole generation of Catholic intellectuals shared this view on the relationship between culture and politics. After many years reflecting on the direction of his interwar journal, Keliuotis repeated the same views that he held during the interwar period: at the time, he claimed, “[i]t was clear to me that until the cultural level of the nation will be low, whatever party will be in rule, it will not be brighter in Lithuania.”¹⁴⁸ Only the modernization of Lithuanian national culture could uplift the existing political culture to a new level. In retrospect, Keliuotis described his position as follows: “First of all, it must be taken to elevate the Lithuanian nation’s culture and civilization to a higher level, to make its intellectual, aesthetic, social, and moral problems a priority, to interest the general public in Lithuanian literature and art, Lithuanian music and theatre, Lithuanian science as well as its [the nation’s] past and future. Only when the entire Lithuanian nation rises to a higher level of culture and civilization, will the political and economic life of Lithuania become brighter.”¹⁴⁹

2. 7. Conclusions

The representatives of the young Catholic generation presented exemplary cases of the socialization through Catholic student movement *Ateitis*, which further directed them to choose the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy as their preferred academic

¹⁴⁶ Alfonsas Eidintas, *Antanas Smetona and His Lithuania: From the National Liberation Movement to an Authoritarian Regime (1893-1940)* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi), 254-8.

¹⁴⁷ Juozas Keliuotis, “Ko siekia *Naujoji Romuva*” [What does *Naujoji Romuva* seek], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1931, No. 47, 1113-4.

¹⁴⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, *Mano autobiografija* [My autobiography] (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2003), 137.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

destination. In this respect, the Young Catholics were the products of Catholic education that was institutionalized at the beginning of the 1920s. Having absorbed the teachings of Šalkauskis about cultural synthesis, these young intellectuals sought to modernize Lithuanian life, seeing the cultural sphere as the most important space for their action.

The new generation of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals shared three important features: 1) this group of Šalkauskis's students blended the cultural agenda of Šalkauskis with concepts and ideas that they appropriated during their study years abroad; 2) they put efforts to take over the leadership of Catholic organizations and become the leading voice of society. Gradually, Šalkauskis's students took over the editorial offices of the main Catholic journals. Moreover, many of them received appointments at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy; 3) just like their teacher, they distanced from party politics and perceived themselves as cultural critics and intellectuals. For them, the word politics had negative connotations. The new generation differed from its predecessors in much more intense exposure to secular thought. Moreover, they greatly differed from the older generation of Catholic leaders, which consisted of primarily clergymen and politicians (sometimes these two preoccupations overlapped), in their career paths.

The study of their thought shows that these young intellectuals transformed the problems originally set out by Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture. Neo-Scholasticism had a rather marginal imprint on Young Catholics' thinking, while at the same time the new generation remained confident in the power of Christianity in the modern world. This was particularly evident from the example of Maceina, who had the most extensive education in philosophy among them; in his philosophical explorations,

Maceina sought alternatives to Neo-Scholasticism, and we will explore this more closely in chapter 4. All of them associated Christianity with progress and the cultural advancement of the nation. By the mid-1930s the representatives of the young generation of Catholic intellectuals were ready to lead the modernization of Lithuanian national culture and conceptualize its new directions.

3. Searching for a New Political Form

In the mid-1930s, the discussions between Catholic thinkers revolved around the consequences of the stock crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed. Another important subject of their thinking was the situation of religion in the country, as the rise of the authoritarian regime in the late 1920s and the early 1930s increasingly brought a confrontation between the state and the church. By that time, a new generation of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals emerged as the principal participants in some of the key controversies related to these issues. These young Catholic thinkers looked for new ways of revitalizing the efforts of national advancement, gradually directing their attention to the relationship between the state and the society, which, they insisted, had to be rethought. This chapter focuses on a particular moment in the autumn of 1935 and the winter of 1936 when the Young Catholics were discussing their visions of a new order in Lithuania. The examination of these discussions will serve us to distill key elements of their social and political thinking, allowing us to understand their connection with their philosophical commitments.

In the autumn of 1935, the circle of young Catholic intellectuals started an informal discussion club, in which they approached the question of political reforms in the state. These meetings resulted in a jointly written manifesto “Towards the Creation of an Organic State” (published in February 1936), which was a symbolic moment when a new generation of Catholic intellectuals, educated by Šalkauskis and other neo-scholastics of Kaunas, emerged as relatively important actors in Lithuanian cultural life. Writing in January of 1937, a commentator in the Catholic *Židinys* asserted the rise of the Young Catholics as one of the most important events in Lithuania in the

year just past, pointing out to a “part of the younger generation, which wants to soberly look at life, to positively treat every healthy thought and initiative, regardless of its political or ideological [*srovinės*] origins, gets stronger.”¹

The manifesto “Towards the Creation of an Organic State” was a major intellectual achievement of the Catholic group, even if its authors’ ideas and intentions were hotly debated in the historiography, indicating that Catholic thought remains one of the more controversial areas for research of interwar Lithuanian history. For some, the manifesto was an expression of home-grown fascism, for others it was the most intellectually sophisticated critique of the authoritarian regime by the democratic opposition.² One can describe it as a product of “intellectual resistance” to both authoritarianism and liberalism as two forms of political organization that the Young Catholics perceived as inferior. In their manifesto, the Young Catholics provided a blend of corporatism and personalism, two anti-liberal ideas that demand our close attention. The analysis of the circumstances of the writing of this manifesto and the ideas that were shared by its authors allows us to explore their political commitments, and how philosophy informed their views on the relationship between the state and society.

¹ Stasys Bačkis [S. B.], “Visuomeninis ir kultūrinis gyvenimas Lietuvoje 1936 metais,” [The Civic and Cultural Life in Lithuania in 1936], *Židinys*, 1937, No. 1, 5.

² Liūtas Mockūnas, “Vienos knygos recenzijos istorija” [A history of one book’s review], *Lietuvos žydų žudynių byla: Dokumentų ir straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001), 780-4; Liūtas Mockūnas, “Prie lietuviškojo fašizmo ištakų” [At the origins of Lithuanian fascism], *Lietuvos žydų žudynių byla: Dokumentų ir straipsnių rinkinys*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas (Vilnius: Vaga, 2001), 785-94. For opposing view see Kęstutis Skrupskelis “Tariamasis jaunųjų katalikų fašizmas” [The alleged fascism of the Young Catholics], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 1999, No. 4, 212-27; Kęstutis Skrupskelis, “Organiskumas, katalikų akcija ir liberalioji srovė” [Organicism, Catholic action and the liberal current], *Kultūros barai*, 2004, No. 1, 70-6; Kęstutis Skrupskelis, “1936-ųjų metų deklaracija” [The manifesto of 1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2012, No. 6, 380-6.

3. 1. Christian Democracy in Lithuanian Political Life

During the interwar period in Lithuania, the Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party (LCDP) played a prominent role in the country's political life. The Catholic elite in Lithuania actively contributed to the establishment of Lithuanian statehood after the First World War. Notably, four out of the twenty signatories of the Independence Act of 1918 were Catholic priests, while three others were laymen affiliated with the Christian Democrats.³ Once the state was formed, the Christian Democrats participated in drafting the Constitutions of 1920 and 1922, which proclaimed the Lithuanian state as a “democratic Republic” and introduced universal suffrage.⁴ In parliamentary politics, the LCDP won three consecutive elections and formed every Lithuanian government in the period between 1920 and 1926. There was no other party on the right that would challenge them in competing for the voters, and the Christian Democrat's emphasis on the connection between national and religious identities seemingly appealed to the church-attending voters.⁵ The support that the LCDP received from the Church made the Lithuanian situation different from that of Western Europe, where the ecclesiastical leadership viewed the emergence of Catholic mass parties as an unwelcome development.⁶ As a result, the Christian Democrats emerged as the major political force during the parliamentary period in interwar

³ For the biographies of the signatories, see Vilma Akmenytė-Ruzgienė and Žydrūnas Mačiukas, “Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės Akto signatarai” [Signatories of the Lithuanian act of independence], accessed on May 22, 2023, https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35532&p_k=1.

⁴ 1920 m. laikinoji Lietuvos Valstybės Konstitucija [Provisional constitution of the state of Lithuania of 1920], accessed on May 10, 2023, <https://www.lrk.lt/39-konstitucijos-istorija/201-1920-m-laikinoji-lietuvos-valstybes-konstitucija#:~:text=1920%20m.%20Laikinoji%20Lietuvos%20Valstyb%C4%97s%20Konstitucija%20%E2%80%93%20tre%C4%8Dioji.m.%20bir%C5%BElio%2010%20dien%C4%85.%20J%C4%85%20pakeit%C4%97%201922%20m.>

⁵ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 263-6.

⁶ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1-20.

Lithuania and one of the most electorally successful Catholic parties in contemporary Europe.

The involvement of the LCDP in shaping the new state, did not automatically make Lithuanian Catholics the supporters of parliamentary democracy. Like their Catholic counterparts in other parts of Europe during that time, they had a somewhat strenuous relationship with the idea of popular representation. In the 1920s, Lithuanian political life was characterized by the inability of the main political parties to forge cohesive political coalitions and was permeated by continuous conflicts between the Christian Democrats and the parties of the left. At the center of their disagreement were the questions of religion, such as religious schooling, the legislation of civil marriage, and the question of priests' salaries. Ideological opponents seemed to hold political views that were incompatible, especially when it came to the division between the right and the left, despite the LCDP positioning itself as a centrist party.⁷ Catholic politicians in Lithuania prioritized the interests of the Catholic Church, making it difficult to find common ground with their secularist counterparts on the left.

While the Christian Democrats never seemed to fully embrace democracy, pragmatic calculations pushed them to participate in the electoral system. Elections worked in their favor, as evidenced by their consistent success in forming governments between 1920 and 1926. The electoral competition allowed the Christian Democrats to maintain their grip on power, and they saw no need for change. The situation in Lithuania mirrors the observations made by Martin Conway regarding the pragmatism of Christian Democratic parties in post-1945 Western Europe, when they actively

⁷ See for instance the following observation: "In general, [...] it is quite clear that there were sharp ideological and political disputes in which it was important to set clear world-view boundaries rather than to find a compromise [...]," Norbertas Černiauskas, "'Šliūbas' tarpukariu: tarp pasaulietinės ir bažnytinės valdžios" ['Vows' between the wars: Between secular and ecclesiastical power], accessed on May 22, 2023, <https://www.bernardinai.lt/2019-12-17-sliubas-tarpukariu-tarp-pasaulietines-ir-baznytines-valdzios/>.

participated in forging new constitutions and tweaking the electoral systems in ways that benefited their interests and increased their chances to be major players in the parliamentary politics.⁸ Similarly, in the early 1920s, the electoral system in Lithuania, coupled with the support from the Catholic Church, worked in favor of the LCDP. Thus, they had little incentive to seek change, despite their reservations about popular representation. However, the situation changed in 1926, when a left-wing coalition of the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Populists came to power, pushing the Christian Democrats to the opposition for the first time. This moment exposed the limitations of their support for popular representation. The LCDP supported the coup of 1926 that overthrew the left-wing government and briefly came back to power after forming a coalition with the National Union (*Tautininkų sąjunga*, or simply the *Tautininkai*), a party led by Antanas Smetona. This coalition, however, did not last for long, and the clash of worldviews, endemic to the political life in Lithuania during the parliamentary period, broke it down, pushing the Christian Democrats out of the government.⁹ In late 1927, the LCDP withdrew from the coalition and found itself in the opposition. This split demonstrated once again the tendency of Lithuanian political parties to set clear worldview boundaries rather than to find a compromise.

The coup marked a turn from parliamentary democracy to authoritarian rule in Lithuania, with the National Union taking over the most important offices in the state. The state soon evolved into a presidential dictatorship, with Smetona remaining in power for the rest of the interwar period. In the late 1920s, the National Union consolidated its power in the state building an authoritarian regime, while other

⁸ Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945–1968* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), 162-70.

⁹ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 279-95.

parties, the Christian Democrats including, were denied the possibility of participating in political life. This new position of the Christian Democrats led them to embrace popular representation. Finding themselves on the margins of political life, the Christian Democrats began advocating for parliamentary democracy as the most suitable form of government, rejecting authoritarianism and calling for new elections. Through their newspaper, *Rytas*, they emphasized the importance of allowing the people to decide who should govern the country.¹⁰ As we shall see later in this chapter, they also rejected the visions of corporatist order that were especially popular among Catholic social theorists after the promulgation of the *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) encyclical by Pius XI. In the mid-1930s, the ideas about corporatist reforms were promoted by the Young Catholics but they were never approved by the LCDP.

3. 2. Catholics *versus* the Smetona Regime

Despite the importance that the Catholic Church held in Lithuania, the consolidation of power by the Smetona regime brought a series of conflicts between the Church and the state, which was followed by the swift decline of the LCDP. During the parliamentary period, the LCDP worked in tandem with the Church, receiving support from the ecclesiastical authorities during the elections, however, the Smetona regime managed to break down this alliance. By the early 1930s, the state and the Church were in a situation of cultural war, and it was not merely a rhetorical figure when the Christian Democrats began accusing the regime of launching a *Kulturkampf*.¹¹ When

¹⁰ Leonas Bistras [Civis], “Lietuviškuoju keliu” [On the Lithuanian way], *Rytas*, March 13, 1936, 3

¹¹ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 218. For the relationship between the state and the church during the first half of the 1930s see Alfonsas Eidintas, *Antanas Smetona and His Lithuania: From the National Liberation Movement to an Authoritarian Regime (1893-1940)* (Leiden:

forced to choose between the preservation of its rights, which were guaranteed by the recently signed Concordat of 1927, and the allegiance to the Catholic political party, the Lithuanian Catholic Church chose the former. Faced with pressure from the state, the ecclesiastical leadership decided to maintain a non-confrontational position, effectively distancing from the Christian Democrats. In a few years, the LCDP saw a decline in its influence, closing down its regional branches and limiting its activities to Kaunas. Its leading politicians, many of whom were priests, withdrew from public life.¹² This steady demise symbolized the declining prominence of the older generation of Catholic politicians who were active during the heyday of the Christian Democrat party. By the mid-1930s, the LCDP had lost its political significance, while Smetona and the National Union ruled the state. The final blow to the party came in February 1936, when the Law on Associations was adopted, leading to the banning of all Lithuania's political parties except the National Union. This move completed the monopolization of political life by the ruling party.

By the early 1930s, the LCDP was a lethargic entity whose activity was largely limited to the pronouncements in its newspaper *Rytas*, which held the Christian Democrat line even with its major political figures now withdrawn from politics. Despite the diminished role of the LCDP, the network of Catholic institutions established in Lithuania in the early 1920s ensured that Catholic intellectual life remained vibrant even under authoritarian rule. For this reason, it was the Catholic wing of society that created the most salient critics of the Smetona regime. For many Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, the regime was the equivalent of what the Third

Brill Rodopi, 2015), chapt 16; Arūnas Streikus, "Laisvosios sklaidos galimybių laikotarpis (1905-1940)" [The period of free expression, 1905-1940], *Krikščionybės istorija Lietuvoje*, ed. Vytautas Ališauskas (Vilnius: Aidai, 2006), 405-10.

¹² For the case of Mykolas Krupavičius who retreated to "internal exile," see Petras Maldeikis, *Prelatas Mykolas Krupavičius* [Prelate Mykolas Krupavičius] (Roma: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1985), 211-32.

Republic was for the French Catholics – because of its hostility to the institutional needs of the Catholic Church, aimed at crushing its political influence, the Smetona regime was perceived as hostile to the Catholic wing of society.¹³ The regime's pressure on the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, which resulted in a significant reduction in teaching staff positions in 1931, further intensified this perception, especially among its professors and students. The ecclesiastical leadership was so outraged by the regime's actions towards the faculty that they even considered establishing a separate Catholic university that would operate independently from the state's interference.¹⁴ While the Young Catholics may not have placed significant emphasis on the absence of the parliament or the demise of the Christian Democrat party, they were concerned with the regime's treatment of Catholic organizations, which faced difficulties imposed by the state.¹⁵ In the early 1930s, as their discontent in Catholic circles with the Smetona regime grew, the Young Catholics became the vocal critics of authoritarianism in Lithuania. They argued for more inclusive treatment of different social groups, perceiving the policies of the regime as an indication that the limits of the political sphere needed to be reduced. Notably, their evident dissatisfaction with the Smetona regime made the Young Catholics into critics of authoritarianism, a feature that distinguished them from the most of Catholic intellectuals in interwar Europe.

In the interwar period, Šalkauskis repeatedly asserted the importance of democracy for a well-ordered society. Drawing inspiration from his experiences in Switzerland, where he had studied during his youth, he regarded the Swiss federalist system as a

¹³ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 216-22.

¹⁴ Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (Brooklyn, NY: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 172-8.

¹⁵ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ateities draugai: Ateitininkų istorija (iki 1940 m.)* [The friends of future: The history of the *Ateitis* movement until 1940] (Vilnius: Naujasis Židinys-Aidai, 2010), 534-48.

model of institutional order for Lithuania.¹⁶ He, therefore, saw a democratic republic, which incidentally was established in Lithuania after the First World War, as the best form of government that ensured that the citizens the freedom of expression, equality and solidarity.¹⁷ Despite his focus on the cultural sphere over politics, Šalkauskis closely followed political developments and did not shy away from expressing his opinions on political matters. For instance, Šalkauskis criticized political parties, which, he believed, lacked a genuine commitment to democracy.¹⁸ One issue of particular importance to Šalkauskis was religious schooling, which became a subject of intense controversy between the Christian Democrats and the left-wing parties of the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Populists throughout the parliamentary period.¹⁹

Responding to the political debates over religious issues, both Šalkauskis and his close friend Kazys Pakštas (1893–1960) suggested limiting the power of the state over the questions of *Weltanschauung*, allowing each worldview a certain cultural autonomy: “[...] a broad cultural autonomy for all groups,” Pakštas wrote, “would provide the opportunity to demonstrate the educational and moral value of each worldview, while at the same time removing the subject of endless misunderstandings from political

¹⁶ The Christian Democrat politician Mykolas Krupavičius later characterized Šalkauskis as a “one hundred percent democrat,” who envisioned Lithuania as a democratic state with “democratic order, democratic elections, democratic municipalities, democratic hospitals and schools.” In Šalkauskis’s vision, according to Krupavičius, the “whole life of Lithuania and Lithuanians were grounded on profound and extensive democracy,” in which “municipalities had to be like Swiss cantons with every peasant educated and civically [*visuomeniškai*] prepared, so that in every occasion one could participate and lead not only a municipality, but also the state.” Mykolas Krupavičius, “Atsiminimų apie prof. Stasį Šalkauskį nuotrupos” [Fragments of the memoirs about prof. Stasys Šalkauskis], Mykolas Krupavičius Fund, Box 54 Folder 58. Lithuanian Institute of History, Vilnius, Lithuania.

¹⁷ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Momento reikalai ir principų reikalavimai (Einant į naują katalikiškojo veikimo tarpsnį)” [Matters of the moment and the demands of principles (Moving into a new phase of Catholic action)], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 481.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 467.

¹⁹ Dangiras Mačiulis, “Kultūrinės autonomijos idėja ir katalikiško švietimo sistema tarpukario Lietuvoje (1918–1940 m.)” [The idea of cultural autonomy and the system of Catholic education in interwar Lithuania, 1918–1940], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*, vol. 35 (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų akademija, 2011), 79–88.

life.”²⁰ They both were disappointed that neither side had listened to their proposals. This experience of political strife over religious issues that they saw in the 1920s and 1930s, as we shall see, shaped not only the political views of Šalkauskis and Pakštas but also the younger generation of Catholic intellectuals. In the mid-1940s, the young Catholics incorporated the notion of cultural autonomy into their political vision, indicating a continuity between their political thinking and the ideas of Šalkauskis and Pakštas.

A committed democrat, Šalkauskis repeatedly voiced his discontent with the level of Lithuanian political culture, which, he asserted, was “totally incompatible with the demands of freedom, equality, and solidarity.”²¹ According to him, the shortcomings of political life stemmed not from the shortcomings of democratic principles, but from the low level of culture. In the summer of 1926, after the parliamentary elections, the philosopher described Lithuanian political life as follows:

The Lithuanian party press is precisely the most visible expression of this lack of culture. I dare not hesitate to state emphatically that in the period leading up to the elections, the party organs of Catholics and non-Catholics, which have been involved in the party struggle for a long time, have shown themselves to be both highly subjective and inexcusably blind, and deliberate carelessness in the dissemination of false news, and the use of demagogic means, and the deliberate discrediting of individual rivals, and the indecently philistine settlement with personal enemies, and other similar manifestations of low culture.²²

The lesson that Šalkauskis learned from observing political life in Lithuania was not to reject democracy but to emphasize its need even more strongly. In this way, Šalkauskis maintained that democracy was not only about elections but about the entire social fabric. Through his writings, he communicated that democracy in

²⁰ Kazys Pakštas, “Kultūrinės autonomijos problema” [The issue of cultural autonomy], *Židinys*, 1926, No. 6-7, 452.

²¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Momento reikalai ir principų reikalavimai (Einant į naują katalikiškojo veikimo tarpsnį)” [Matters of the moment and the demands of principles (Moving into a new phase of Catholic action)], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 453.

²² *Ibid.*

Lithuania needed to be deepened even further, by expanding democratic practices into social life.

After the coup of 1926 that was followed by the consolidation of the authoritarian regime, Šalkauskis continued his criticism of Lithuanian political life throughout the 1930s. “The *Tautininkai* regime,” he wrote in an undated manuscript, “is the *dictatorship* of a relatively small group of people who could not acquire power under normal conditions of lawful operation.”²³ He criticized the Smetona regime because in it “not the interests of the government are subordinated to the interests of the public, but, on the contrary, the interests of the public are subordinated to the interests of the government.”²⁴ Similarly, Šalkauskis was critical of the tactics of the Christian Democrats, believing that their party “have undermined the consolidation of civic solidarity.”²⁵ The same sentiments were popular among his students. Critical of the Smetona regime, the Young Catholics did not identify with the political tradition of the Lithuanian Christian Democrats either, seeing the party’s activities as representing the political culture of the 1920s, which they were trying to overcome. Šalkauskis continued to speak out against the Smetona regime throughout the 1930s, and his words inspired the Young Catholics to develop their own “third way” vision of politics.

An important element of this negative attitude towards the Smetona regime and the political culture that it represented was the emphasis on generational conflict in the debates of young Catholic intellectuals. Many of them framed it as a clash between

²³ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Tautininkų režimo kritika” [The critique of the *Tautininkai* regime], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 585.

²⁴ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Garbingasai pone Prezidente” [Dear Mr. President], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 550.

²⁵ As quoted in Ramūnas Labanauskas, “Jaunųjų katalikų sąjūdis: Politinės formavimosi aplinkybės 1935-1936 m.” [The Young Catholics’ movement: Background to political formation in 1935-1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 6-7, 248-57, here at: 251.

the old who could not shake the habit of looking to Russian culture, and the young who had no positive feelings for it and sympathized only with Western Europe.²⁶ The old generation, they stressed, had been brought up in the environment of the Russian Empire, and had therefore been corrupted by the materialist spirit that had prevailed in its universities, which had poisoned the life of the state even in the democratic period, and which they described as permeated by the struggles of the different political groups and the predominance of vested interests. The progress of the nation, the young Catholic intellectuals were convinced, demanded a transcendence of the ideological conflicts that characterized political life in the 1920s. These views are illustrated by the debate among the young Lithuanian intellectuals on the topic of generational conflict initiated by Keliuotis in 1933, in which a reoccurring theme was that the “spirit of old age,” which, they suggested, took over the institutions, had to be overcome to modernize national culture. The “spirit of old age” was a certain moral disease, some of them suggested, that “poison[ed] the entire organism of the nation.”²⁷ These young Catholic intellectuals believed that they had to take the lead in society and change its negative habits. Keliuotis for instance asserted in these discussions that “the old have no right to demand from us that their faults would be tolerated, even defended or adopted. [...] The young want to reform life, bring something new, revive and dynamize it.”²⁸

A characteristic example of this critique directed against the decadent habits of the older generation was a 1935 novel *The Careerists* (*Karjeristai*) by Juozas Grušas (1901–1986). The writer Grušas, who attended Šalkauskis’s lectures in the 1920s,

²⁶ Dangiras Mačiulis, “*Naujosios Romuvos trajektorija: Nuo tautos vienybės projekto iki kultūrinės saviizoliacijos* [The trajectory of *Naujoji Romuva*: From the project of national unity to cultural self-isolation], *Darbai ir dienos* 38 (2004): 17-48, here at: 40.

²⁷ “Senieji ir jaunieji” [The old and the young], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933, No. 148, 882-3.

²⁸ Ibid.

portrayed the life of bureaucrats from the state's administrative apparatus as permeated with servile habits, materialism, and egoism. Grušas insisted that life was formed by personalities, while class and collective had only secondary importance. However, personality cannot thrive in an environment dominated by careerism. In the portrayal of the novel, the idealism of the young Lithuanians experienced blows coming from the careerists who were educated in other national traditions. One of these careerists, the politician Murza, was born in Russia, from where he brought to Lithuania the spirit of nihilism; now he was, in Grušas's telling, "one of the most influential people of the ruling party."²⁹ Another one, the economist Nikolskis, was a descendent of the Polish-speaking nobility, to whom "the broad masses in Lithuania do not have their own traditions, no culture, so to speak. I will say, strange are those who worship the people."³⁰ These careerists were concerned only with their personal gain: as Nikolskis explained, "Lithuania did not exist yesterday and may not exist tomorrow, but we will always have to live."³¹ The novel seemed to imply that Lithuania needed personalities and not careerists.

The plot of Grušas's novel indicated that personal freedom and creativity were incompatible with the bourgeois lifestyle and bureaucratic career. As one of the characters stated, "I have discovered that officials will neither create the welfare of the nation nor develop personalities. Officials are some kind of modern slaves."³² Meanwhile, religion helped to maintain spiritual independence in a society dominated by philistine egoism. Only people born in Lithuania and coming from a peasant background, such as the main protagonist of the novel Viktoras Domantas, who was young and religious, possessed the necessary idealist attitude: "In my deepest

²⁹ Juozas Grušas, *Karjeristai* [The careerists] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1935), 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

³² *Ibid.*, 187.

conviction, everyone needs to have some ideal,” he suggested, such as “the welfare of the nation, science, art or the truth of the Gospel. Otherwise, life very quickly gets boring and loses meaning.”³³ However, confronted with the manifestations of philistinism, Domantas did not oppose it; because of that, he gradually lost his idealism, until one day he was sacked from office. In contrast to the idealism inherent to the young generation, Grušas depicted bureaucracy as permeated with servilism: in the administrative apparatus, one had always to serve one’s superior. The novel appeared to suggest that only a career in the sphere of culture, such as journalism, for instance, could provide conditions for a personality to retain moral autonomy and spiritual freedom.

Grušas’s novel was an important document that revealed the orientation of Catholic intellectuals of his generation, many of whom agreed that national culture was formed only by personalities that possessed necessary idealism. Reviewing this book, Ambrazevičius asserted that it “hit the most painful wound,” showing the poverty of Lithuanian spiritual life. It was clear to him that Lithuania was suffering from careerism, which had become a “cancer.”³⁴ Many former Šalkauskis students agreed that creativity required spiritual autonomy – personality must form life, but not vice versa. In the words of Ambrazevičius, “[l]ife is usually led by the few who manage to maintain an independent spirit;” meanwhile, those who pursued a career in the state apparatus lost their creative impulses: “Even those who had a more volatile, [and] rebellious spirit when they were students, they become quiet because they know that the state is paying their salary, and it may stop doing so. It is not the state official who could be more independent, but the man of the free profession, as Grušas rightly

³³ Ibid., 85.

³⁴ Juozas Ambrazevičius [J. A.], “J. Grušo *Karjeristai*” [Review], *Židinys*, 1935, No. 5-6, 596-9.

pointed out in *The Careerists*.³⁵ In the coming years, the term “person,” infused with the meaning of idealism, activism, and creativity, gradually became an important element in the young Catholic intellectuals’ thinking. They wanted to transform the new Lithuanian urban class into personalities – independent, dynamic, and acknowledging the primacy of the spiritual element in their lives. In the autumn of 1935, both Grušas and Ambrazevičius, concerned with the moral decay of Lithuanian society, joined the discussion circle of the young Catholic intellectuals, later signing the manifesto “Towards the Creation of an Organic State.”

Another important feature of young Catholic thinking was the criticism of urban sociability and bourgeois spirit, which was depicted as harmful to the cause of nation-building. Maceina, for example, criticized the bourgeois culture which he claimed was spreading in Lithuanian society: “The bourgeois spirit can be found not only in the sphere of economics, but also among scholars, artists, and even among religions.”³⁶ The bourgeois spirit was characterized by utilitarian attitudes and practicality; Maceina described bourgeois life as completely uncreative, contrasting it with the understanding of man as a creative being conceptualized in his philosophy of culture; its representatives, according to Maceina, were incapable of thinking beyond the conventions of the time – such shallow imaginations could not conceive that the future could differ from the present. According to Maceina, the bourgeois spirit contradicted the very nature of man. “Whoever lives the life of a more earshot reality and whoever has an organic relationship with the depths of life can never tolerate the defenders of

³⁵ Juozas Ambrazevičius, “Dvasinis lietuvių veidas nepriklausomoj Lietuvoj” [The spiritual face of the Lithuanian in the independent Lithuania], *Zidinys*, 1938, No. 5-6, 652-60, here at: 658.

³⁶ Antanas Maceina, “Buržuazinės dvasios kultūra” [The culture of the bourgeois spirit], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 51-52, 946-9, here at: 946.

the periphery and the harbingers of flattening.”³⁷ It was clear that the manifestations of the bourgeois spirit in Lithuanian life could not be tolerated.

During the last days of democracy in interwar Lithuania, Catholic youth was dissatisfied with the political situation in the country, which was evident by their enthusiasm about the coup d'état and regime change in 1926.³⁸ Šalkauskis, on the other hand, cautioned against the politicization of the young as well as against the support for the “revolution” in the country, which, he believed, through its unlawful means could bring only harm to the consciousness of Lithuanian society.³⁹ At the same time, it did not seem that the youth was particularly supportive of Catholic authoritarianism whose examples they saw present in other countries. Maceina for instance renounced the integral nationalism of the *Action Française* after the movement was condemned by Pope Pius XI in 1927, denouncing the instrumentalization of Catholicism that he recognized in the French movement, which “saw the Church only as a natural means of maintaining order, without seeing any supernatural purpose in it at all.”⁴⁰ It was necessary, Maceina argued, for Catholics to reject integral nationalism as incompatible with a Christian understanding of nationhood, making the nation an idol: “The Church has always insisted and will always insist that religion should take the first place in the order of absolute values. A

³⁷ Ibid., 949.

³⁸ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ateities draugai: Ateitininkų istorija (iki 1940 m.)* [The friends of future: The history of the *Ateitis* movement until 1940] (Vilnius: Naujasis Židinys-Aidai, 2010), 530-2.

³⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Laiškas Prezidentui Antanui Smetonai” [The letter to the President Antanas Smetona], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 526-37; Stasys Šalkauskis, *Visuomeninis auklėjimas* [Civic upbringing] (Kaunas: 1927), 10.

⁴⁰ Antanas Maceina, “*Action Française* arba nacionalizmo ir katalikybės konfliktas prancūzuose” [*Action Française*, or the conflict between hypernationalism and Catholicism in France], *Ateitis*, 1929, No. 7-9, 320-3.

nation without religion is chauvinism. [...] The French nationalists acted quite contrary to the Church's teaching in this respect.”⁴¹

Under the Smetona regime, the question of parliamentary elections was repeatedly brought up by Šalkauskis, who insisted that this element of political order was prescribed by the Constitution. Even the Constitution of 1928, which significantly strengthened the executive powers and was issued by Smetona himself, recognized the institution of parliament as part of the state's institutional framework. However, the parliament was dissolved in 1927 and did not convene until the summer of 1936, when it was re-established holding merely consultative powers. Notably, this was done only after the banning of all Lithuanian political parties except the National Union, which left no room for electoral contestation of the ruling party's power. Consequently, the National Union obtained an overwhelming majority in the parliament.⁴² These maneuvers of the Smetona regime run contrary to Šalkauskis's beliefs. A firm supporter of democracy and parliamentarianism, Šalkauskis asserted that democratic order indicated nation's high level of culture.⁴³ In 1926, for instance, Šalkauskis addressed the “crisis of democracy” by calling to recognize the equality between the people based on their shared personhood. He also introduced corporatism, which he envisioned as an instrument to achieve democracy in the social and economic sphere, ensuring the rights of workers and their organizations: “If, politically, the most characteristic and consistent democratic form of order is a republic, then, in economic [and] social terms, that form will be the corporatist

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Alfonsas Eidintas, “The Presidential Republic,” *Lithuania in European Politics: The Years of the First Republic, 1918-40*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas, Vytautas Žalys, and Alfred Erich Senn (Vilnius: Valga, 1997), 111-37.

⁴³ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, “Šalkauskis ir degutas Kauno gatvėse” [Šalkauskis and tar on the streets of Kaunas], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 9-10, 389-95.

order.”⁴⁴ He argued for the introduction of wide-ranging political reforms that would include the restoration of political parties, the introduction of corporatist bodies, the federalization of the state, and the introduction of the so-called cultural autonomy that would allow different communities to ensure their “spiritual self-determination and equality of expression.”⁴⁵ His viewpoint in 1935, which Šalkauskis explained in his letter to Smetona, was that the regime both lacked legitimacy and had a demoralizing effect on society, creating people without initiative that were ready to obey.⁴⁶

Šalkauskis advocated the introduction of corporatism as early as the 1920s, but this idea gained great popularity especially after 1931, when Pius XI, in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which was published at the height of the economic depression, proposed corporatism as the most appropriate response to the materialistic tendencies of modern life, which were embodied in both communism and capitalism. In the face of the Great Depression, the Pope proposed corporatist order as part of the “full restoration of human society in Christ,” presenting it as a means of reversing the moral decline caused by secular ideas.⁴⁷ Although *Quadragesimo Anno* addressed social issues only, it shaped the language of Catholic politics in the whole of Europe, as the 1930s witnessed the shift to the right of many Catholic political groups, which now moved away from their centrism towards a new kind of authoritarian politics

⁴⁴ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Momento reikalai ir principų reikalavimai (Einant į naują katalikiškojo veikimo tarpsnį)” [Matters of the moment and the demands of principles (Moving into a new phase of Catholic action)], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 481.

⁴⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Momento reikalai ir principų reikalavimai (Einant į naują katalikiškojo veikimo tarpsnį)” [Matters of the moment and the demands of principles (Moving into a new phase of Catholic action)], *Antologija* (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2014), 196.

⁴⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Laiškas Prezidentui Antanui Smetonai” [The letter to the President Antanas Smetona], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 532.

⁴⁷ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* [Encyclical on Reconstruction of the Social Order], sec. 138, accessed on May 16, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

based on corporatist vision.⁴⁸ The spread of corporatist ideas among Catholic thinkers indicated that in their thinking the line between the social and the political was being redrawn, if only because the *Quadragesimo Anno* encyclical stressed that the state had to take an active role in solving social problems – a novel claim in the papal pronouncements, as popes usually avoided formulating explicitly political claims in the encyclicals.⁴⁹ This fundamental ambiguity in conceptualizing the distinction between the social and the political evident in the papal teachings remained a sign of Catholic political thought throughout the 1930s, and, as we shall see, was also a characteristic feature of the Young Catholics’ manifesto on a new order in Lithuania.

3. 3. Corporatism, Personalism, and National Advancement

Inspired by the *Quadragesimo Anno* encyclical by Pius XI, the Young Catholics sought to integrate corporations as intermediary bodies between the state and the society that would allow the representation of their economic interests, with professions participating in policy-making and economic planning.⁵⁰ Although envisioned corporations as one of the key elements in the new order, they did not share the nostalgia of the medieval guilds, which, as some of them suggested, were only imperfect embodiments of the corporatist idea. This was the argument pursued

⁴⁸ Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 37-8; John Pollard, “Corporatism and Political Catholicism: The Impact of Catholic Corporatism in Inter-war Europe,” *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, ed. António Costa Pinto (London: Routledge, 2017), 42-59, here at: 49-55.

⁴⁹ See specially James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), chapt. 2 and 3.

⁵⁰ For useful overviews of the corporatist models in interwar Europe see António Costa Pinto, “Corporatism and ‘Organic Representation’ in European Dictatorships,” *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, ed. Antonio Costa Pinto (London: Routledge, 2017), 3-41; António Costa Pinto, “Fascism, Corporatism and the Crafting of Authoritarian Institutions in Inter-War European Dictatorships,” *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 87-117; Philippe C. Schmitter, “Still the Century of Corporatism?” *The Review of Politics* 36 (1) (1974): 85-131.

by the philosopher Pranas Mantvydas (1909–1960), who analyzed the social order of medieval France, pointing out that during the Middle Ages corporations, even if a welcome phenomenon, was confined to only small portions of society and had a very limited impact on the medieval social order, did not achieve its aimed social harmony in the medieval society as a whole.⁵¹ Lacking nostalgia for a bygone era of the medieval past, these Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals perceived corporations as a way to solve the problems of modern society, which they saw was threatened by both individualism and collectivism.

The way the Young Catholics interpreted corporatism differed from the corporatism that was adopted in Austria, Portugal, and Italy. We will come back to his point later in his chapter but how it is sufficient to note that they interpreted their envisioned corporatism in opposition to the statist corporatism of these countries, especially stressing the dissimilarity between the “organic state” and Italian-style corporatism. A thinker that possessed the most comprehensive knowledge of corporatism in other European states was Dielininkaitis, who warned against the unverified results of statist corporatism; instead, he argued for the institutionalization of the so-called communal corporatism that would be protected from the interference from the state.⁵² To understand the political orientation of the Young Catholics, it is necessary to look at his intellectual trajectory.

Having studied sociology at the Sorbonne, Dielininkaitis was well-equipped with the knowledge of sociological theories. Later he referred to Durkheim, asserting that even the father of French sociology, who was by no means Catholic, came “to that

⁵¹ Pranas Mantvydas, “Korporatyvizmo praeitis” [The past of corporatism], *Raštai* [Writings], ed. Adolfas Poška (Vilnius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2005), 326–57.

⁵² Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Korporacinė santvarka: Jos supratimas, bandymai realizuoti ir du pagrindiniai tipai* [The corporatist order: Its understanding, attempts to realize, and two main types] (Kaunas: Šviesos bendrovė, 1936).

understanding, which by many sociologists of our day is called the *concept of organic society and state*,” implying the French sociologist’ proximity to his own envisioned corporatist order.⁵³ Besides the knowledge of the Durkheimian school, whose adepts he encountered studying in Paris, Dielininkaitis drew on Catholic social thinkers. In the summer of 1933, Dielininkaitis traveled to Switzerland, where he participated in a summer course on Catholic social and political theories organized at the University of Fribourg. In the course, particular attention was given to corporatism, which in the early 1930s was in vogue in Switzerland, where a number of Swiss Catholic intellectuals gathered around the Swiss Corporatist Union to advocate for new social and political order.⁵⁴ While not much is known about these courses, later Dielininkaitis published his overview of what he has learned there, summarizing the dissatisfaction of Swiss Catholic thinkers with their state: present-day Switzerland was “bureaucratic, centralist, statist and materialist. At the same time, it is more or less a caricature of the old traditional Swiss democracy, which was based on federalist, Christian, and corporatist foundations and strong family traditions.”⁵⁵ Dielininkaitis described the corporatist order as the means against the individualism of capitalist system: in corporations, “the human person, *not capital*, is given the central role,” and their introduction “is supposed to abolish the class struggle and bring about social peace.”⁵⁶ After coming back from his studies abroad, Dielininkaitis became the major

⁵³ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Korporatyvinė santvarka organiškoje valstybėje” [The corporatist order in an organic state], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1936, No. 15-16, 344-7, here at: 346.

⁵⁴ Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 39.

⁵⁵ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Socialinė korporatyvinė santvarka Šveicarijoje” [The social corporatist order in Switzerland], *Židinys*, 1933, No. 8-9, 203-6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

advocate of corporatist ideas in Lithuania, arguing for a “spontaneous, organized and autonomous operation of separate classes and professions.”⁵⁷

On his return to Lithuania, Dielininkaitis joined the chorus of other Catholic intellectuals who were attracted to the ideas of corporatism. Šalkauskis for instance suggested already in the 1920s that corporatist order “not only brings balance to economic, social and political relations but also [...] educates the broad masses in the cause of democratic order.”⁵⁸ These ideas became popular in Lithuania in the 1930s, and the young Catholic intellectuals in particular were interested in corporatist experiments that they saw in other countries. The sociologist Grigas Valančius (1906–1978), who studied sociology and political economy in Vienna, where he became enchanted with the “universalist” brand of authoritarianism advocated by the Austrian social theorist Othmar Spann, predicted in 1933 that “our future state will be a corporate state in its form and structure.”⁵⁹ Keliuotis meanwhile evaluated favorably the Italian model of corporatism, after his 1935 visit to Italy suggesting that corporations had to be introduced into Lithuanian cultural life as well, believing that they would enable writers and artists to direct the cultural sphere more efficiently.⁶⁰ Maceina captured the prevailing sentiment by observing in late 1935 that “interest in the corporate idea in the cultural world today is very high. Anyone who, in one way or another, consciously participates in the civic life of cultured countries today is

⁵⁷ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Krikščionių darbininkų suvažiavimo išvakarėse” [On the eve of the congress of the Christian workers] *Rytas*, April 14, 1934, 3.

⁵⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Momento reikalai ir principų reikalavimai (Einant į naują katalikiškojo veikimo tarpsnį)” [Matters of the moment and the demands of principles (Moving into a new phase of Catholic action)], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 184-5. Originally published in *Židinys*, 1926, No. 10, 163-72; No. 11, 230-42.

⁵⁹ Grigas Valančius, “Mūsų visuomenės dinamika” [The dynamics of our society], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933, No. 128-9, 553-5, here at: 554.

⁶⁰ Juozas Keliuotis, “Į naująjį dinamizmą” [Towards the new dynamism], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 33-4, 605-9.

immediately confronted with the concept of corporation, with the problem of corporation, and with the various solutions to this problem.”⁶¹

While the young Catholic intellectuals were particularly receptive to corporatist thought, the intellectual vanguard of the Christian Democrat party was hostile to corporatism, associating it with authoritarianism. Despite Šalkauskis’s insistence that corporatism was beneficial for the democratic order, the political realities of the 1920s and 1930s indicated otherwise: the corporatist ideas became increasingly popular among those who were frustrated with party politics, and this was noted by the Lithuanian Christian Democrats. Their newspaper *Rytas* asserted that the introduction of corporatism led to the dismantling of democratic order and the introduction of dictatorship. For example, an anonymous author in *Rytas* noted that “as you look at the corporate order, in theory it is very beautiful,” however, in practice the implementation of corporatism often meant not only the liquidation of political parties and the parliamentary system but also the concentration of power in the hands of one group. Referring to an example of the corporatist reforms in Germany, this author argued that “by initiating any economic reforms, they [the creators of the corporatist order] seek to level the political thinking of citizens as well. This often results in completely biased, low-profile, and unsubstantiated criticism of political parties.”⁶² The opinion on corporate order represented by *Rytas* was indicative of the whole generation of former Christian Democrat politicians. None of them shared the Young Catholics’ enthusiasm for corporatism, even though it was endorsed by Pope Pius XI as the best way to deal with the economic problems of the day.

⁶¹ Antanas Maceina, “Korporacijos problema” [The problem of corporation], *Tiesos kelias*, 1935, No. 12, 639-55, here at: 639.

⁶² “Valstybės santvarka ir partija” [The order of the state and the party], *Rytas*, July 23, 1934, 3.

The negative views of many Christian Democrats were based on their personal experience – the advent of corporatism in Lithuania coincided with the introduction of presidential dictatorship. One of the main reasons for this stance was a clear association of corporatism with the present authoritarian regime in Lithuania, which too supported a corporatist model. After the coup of 1926, the newly adopted Constitution of 1928 introduced certain elements of the corporatist order into economic life, while at the same time expanding the executive powers.⁶³ By the mid-1930s, corporatism was already under implementation in Lithuania by the Smetona regime, and the Christian Democrat *Rytas* criticized such efforts, advocating for the restoration of the democratic order instead. Its chief editor Bistras insisted that the people must choose for themselves which political party should govern them.⁶⁴ After all, the democratic period was very successful for the Christian Democrat party and, given the democratic elections would be re-established, similar success could be expected in the future.

When discussing their vision of the new state, the Young Catholics conceptualized it by using the distinction between the human “person” and the human “individual,” which they inherited from Šalkauskis. Until the moment of writing, none of the authors gave much attention to this distinction that they first encountered in Šalkauskis’s lectures on philosophy of culture. As we may remember from chapter 1, Šalkauskis used the distinction to conceptualize cultural advancement and even identified it with the difference between the intelligentsia and the people. In his lectures, using the Aristotelian categories, Šalkauskis asserted that “[t]he efficient cause of culture is the free and conscious human person, who is able to complete the

⁶³ “Lietuvos Valstybės Konstitucija,” [The Constitution of the state of Lithuania], *Vyriausybės žinios*, May 25, 1928, 1-6, here at: 5.

⁶⁴ Leonas Bistras [Civis], “Lietuviškojo keliu” [On the Lithuanian way], *Rytas*, March 13, 1936, 3.

purposefulness inherent in nature through consciously pursued goals.”⁶⁵ Keliuotis, for instance, asserted, echoing Šalkauskis, that “the institutions of the civilization are created [...] by the human personality that is the principle of the existence of civic life, and the carrier and creator of civilization.”⁶⁶ As the above-discussed example of Grušas’s book *The Careerists* indicated, the word “personality” was frequently used by the young Catholic intellectuals, who insisted that Lithuania needed personalities; in their usage, however, this term lacked clearly articulated philosophical content.

Until the autumn of 1935, the only young Catholic intellectual who referred to personalist ideas was Keliuotis. Rejecting both individualism and collectivism, he strived to find a middle way in which man would retain his individuality while simultaneously acknowledging his communal side. In his art criticism, Keliuotis for example asserted that art was the expression of man’s individuality, but at the same time it had a civic role: “Art is made by the artist and not by society. But the artist is not just some aesthetic category. He is a concrete and living human individual. And human nature is social. Therefore, art, as the fruit of man’s original creative activity, has a civic character.”⁶⁷ Keliuotis drew on the writings of the French “non-conformist” *Ordre Nouveau* group – Henri Daniel-Rops, Alexandre Marc, and René Dupuis – arguing that the stagnating life of Lithuania needed a spiritual revolution that would create a new totality: “The primacy of the human personality and the spiritual principle must be proclaimed. [...] What is needed is a totalist revolution that will change both the spiritual and the material life of humanity. Above all, a spiritual revolution is needed which is permanent; for life is only alive when it is in constant

⁶⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Kultūros filosofija” [Philosophy of culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990), 426-7.

⁶⁶ Juozas Keliuotis, *Visuomeninis idealas: Visuomeninės filosofijos metmenys* [The civic ideal: An outline of the civic philosophy] (Kaunas: Naujoji Romuva, 1935), 39.

⁶⁷ Juozas Keliuotis, “Visuomeninis meno vaidmuo” [Civic role of art], *Meno kultūra*, 1930, No. 3, 3-4.

revival, in constant revolt. [...] The new revolution must be essentially a revenge of concreteness over abstraction, a preference for personalist human factors over collectivist and artificial mechanisms.”⁶⁸

As part of the “spiritual and cultural revolution” that Keliuotis encouraged, in the autumn of 1935, his edited *Naujoji Romuva* even published a few translations from Mounier’s *Esprit*, which proclaimed the primacy of the spiritual. Their translator, a certain Tadas Venta, which perhaps was a pseudonym, asserted that Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals had a lot to learn from their French colleagues, suggesting forming a circle of *Esprit* followers in Kaunas. “However,” he stressed, “I would suggest that *only the young souls* should undertake that work. The old souls who are old and fragile, who only know how to run on the usual tracks, will not understand the ideas the *Esprit* group is preaching.”⁶⁹ Although the references to the French “non-conformist” personalist groups remained scarce in Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals’ writings, it was not a coincidence that the young Polish poet by the name of Czesław Miłosz, who during his holiday trip to Lithuania visited Keliuotis working at the editorial office, described the agenda of *Naujoji Romuva* as resembling that of *Esprit*. In 1938, writing to the Polish literary audience, Miłosz suggested that *Naujoji Romuva* was “the most serious artistic and literary weekly [in Lithuania]. It cannot be called eclectic, because although it welcomes writers from various directions, it expresses a certain program of its own, which is similar in many respects to that of the French group *Esprit*: Catholicism, anti-totalism, and democratism.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, *Visuomeninis idealas: Visuomeninės filosofijos metmenys* [The civic ideal: An outline of the civic philosophy] (Kaunas: Naujoji Romuva, 1935), 165.

⁶⁹ Tadas Venta, “Dvasingumo ir asmens takais” [On the ways of spirituality and the person], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 47, 849-50, here at: 850.

⁷⁰ Czesław Miłosz, “Spojrzenie na literaturę litewską” [A look at Lithuanian literature], *Ateneum*, 1938, No. 6, 900-5.

Young Catholics' manifesto seems to be influenced by Catholic personalist thinkers, those assertions on the primacy of the human "person" shaped their understanding of social order. Of all the participants, Maceina appeared the most qualified to explain the difference between the human "person" and the human "individual" to his peers. Since the mid-1930s, Maceina used the concept of the human "person" in his writings on social issues, forging an eclectic version of personalism that drew on his teacher Šalkauskis as well as on Nicolay Berdyaev, Emmanuel Mounier, and Max Scheler. In his 1938 book *Social Justice (Socijalinis teisingumas)* for example Maceina referred extensively to Mounier's *From Capitalist Property to Human Property* (1936), which he read from the German translation. Inspired by the personalist ideas, Maceina even considered writing a larger study on the subject of personhood, provisionally entitled *The Apology of the Person (Asmens apologija)*, which he planned to publish in 1939, but never finished.⁷¹ While the latter book project did not come to fruition, it was evident that during the second half of the 1930s Maceina repeatedly engaged with personalist ideas. It should therefore be unsurprising that in these discussions of the Catholic intellectuals on new social and political order Maceina was the one who led the way in defining the meaning of the distinction between the human "person" and the human "individual." Ivinskis, who was one of the participants in the drafting of their manifesto, later remembered that "in Maceina's apartment, when the final text of the manifesto was being adopted, there was a long debate about the difference

⁷¹ We know this information only from the publishing plans of the publishing house *Žinija*, which listed Maceina's *The Apology of the Person* among its forthcoming books in 1939. It is not clear whether this was a free-standing project that was left unfinished, or Maceina changed his mind and reworked parts of it into his 1940 book *The Collapse of the Bourgeoisie*, which was published by different publishing house. For the publishing plans of *Žinija* see Vladas Žukas, *Bendrovės knygoms leisti ir platinti 1918-1940* [Book publishing and distribution companies, 1918-1940] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1998), 213.

between the ‘person’ and the ‘individual.’ We got confused. Maceina, who was one of the editors of the text, gave clear definitions.”⁷²

In his writings, Maceina suggested that the properly conceived state had to take into account both the human “person” and the human “individual,” asserting that “psychoanalysis has revealed the depths of the human being. In these depths, the divide of human being has been discovered [...]; that he is equally willing to create and to destroy, to join the community and to wander alone; that he is both the devil and the Blessed Virgin, as M[ax] Scheler characterized him.”⁷³ Man then was characterized by antinomy inherent to his soul: the “person” was a spiritual entity interconnected with organic community, while the “individual” for Maceina represented a physical entity that was subjected to the demands of the natural world and existed as an atomized particle of society. This Maceina’s pronouncement revealed a distinctive feature of the Young Catholics’ personalist commitment: rather than aiming to replace the “individual” with the “person,” in their political vision they attempted to accommodate both of these elements as two constitutive parts of the human being. In this respect, they remained close to Šalkauskis’s usage of this distinction that he developed in his lectures on philosophy of culture, which was discussed in chapter 1; meanwhile, in the more conventional usage of this distinction by the major personalist thinkers, the term “individual” was associated with “liberal individualism,” which, in their view, contradicted the human dignity and therefore had to be purified out of the human self.⁷⁴ We will come back to Maceina and the circumstances of the writing of the manifesto later, but for now, it is important to note

⁷² As quoted in Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (New York: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 183.

⁷³ Antanas Maceina, “Individas-asmuo ir valstybė” [The individual-person and the state], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 12, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2007), 38-51, here at: 40.

⁷⁴ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2022), 204.

that the instrumentalization of the distinction indicated that the young Catholic intellectuals were primarily concerned with the cultural advancement of the nation as well as the creation of conditions that would allow men to exercise their freedom.

Although the manifesto did not refer to any intellectual in particular, its authors likely drew from sources such as the French Catholic legal theorist Eugène Duthoit, the President of Social Weeks in France, who discussed the importance of the corporatist order as a third alternative to both liberalism and authoritarianism. Later in 1936, the *XX Amžius* newspaper, which at the time of writing the manifesto was yet to be launched by the Young Catholics, published an interview with this French intellectual, where Duthoit presented his corporatist vision to the Lithuanian readers, asserting the superiority of communal corporatism and stressing its role as a mediator between the state and the individual, where the initiative was delegated to corporations autonomous from the state.⁷⁵ The distinction between the statist and communal corporatism that Duthoit used was adopted by both Dielininkaitis and Maceina, both of whom asserted the importance of the private initiative in the organic order.⁷⁶

The participants in these discussions on the new political order in Lithuania were concerned with the issue of national advancement, which they saw as too stagnant. At that time, Lithuania's economy had not yet recovered from the economic crisis of 1929, as its agrarian export economy made it dependent on the situation in the United Kingdom and German markets; in a relatively short period, 1932-1935, Lithuania lost both these markets, and it was during this time that it suffered the worst effects of the

⁷⁵ "Interview su sociologu ekonomistu prof. Eugene Duthoit" [Interview with the sociologist [and] economist prof. Eugene Duthoit], *XX amžius*, December 14, 1936, 3.

⁷⁶ Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Korporacinė santvarka: Jos supratimas, bandymai realizuoti ir du pagrindiniai tipai* [The corporatist order: Its understanding, attempts to realize, and two main types] (Kaunas: Šviesos bendrovė, 1936); Antanas Maceina, "Korporacijos problema" [The problem of corporation], *Tiesos kelias*, 1935, No. 12, 639-55.

Great Depression.⁷⁷ Thus, the debates of young Catholic intellectuals on new political form took place against the backdrop of the ongoing economic crisis.

In the mid-1930s, the discussions on national advancement gave particular traction in the Catholic press. Šalkauskis formulated the agenda in his 1932 essay: “In a word, *the Lithuanian nation needs to be cultured in the order of the times*, when all the lively national forces are strained for cultural progress with maximum efficiency. Becoming cultured [*kultūrėjimas*] in the order of the times is an urgent requirement of our national life: *we are doomed to perish if we fail to accelerate in the order of the times the pace of national education and to stand in the shortest possible time on an equal footing with the cultured nations of Europe.*”⁷⁸ Keliuotis’s *Naujoji Romuva* hosted a number of discussions on this question. One of the key participants in these discussions was Pakštas, who was convinced that the Lithuanian pace of modernization had to be accelerated for the nation to survive in the unfavorable geopolitical conditions trapped among its more powerful neighbors. He believed that “Western European civilization is moving at a frantic pace. We need to do not only what they are doing today, but also what [they] did yesterday and the day before. We need to jump right away for almost a century.”⁷⁹ It was necessary, he repeated frequently, to turn the clock of Lithuania a hundred years forward.⁸⁰ Seeing the effects of the Great Depression on the Lithuanian economy, only further strengthened Pakštas’s impression of Lithuania’s backwardness. Based on his research, Pakštas concluded that Lithuania lagged behind all the countries of the Baltic region. In his

⁷⁷ Gediminas Vaskela, “Ekonomika” [Economics], *Lietuvos istorija* [History of Lithuania], vol. 10, part 2 (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2015), 290-4.

⁷⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Svarbieji lietuvių tautos ugdymo uždaviniai” [The most important tasks of Lithuanian education], *Židinys*, 1932, No. 8-9, 110-26, here at: 111.

⁷⁹ This quotation is taken from the summary of Pakštas’s lecture, see Vincas Trumpa, “Lietuvos ūkio gairės” [The guidelines of Lithuanian economics], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 46, 841-3, here at: 841.

⁸⁰ Julijonas Būtėnas [Btns], “Ketvirtasis Ateitininkų Jubiliejinis Kongresas,” [The fourth anniversary congress of the *Ateitis*] *Rytas*, July 24, 1935, 3.

lectures, Pakštas asserted that it was necessary for Lithuania to catch up with more developed countries because only a high level of development could protect small nations from extinction: “in the pace of cultural progress and its achievements lie the real security and irrevocable guarantee for the life of small nations. The hare and the antelope survive most importantly because they have faster legs than the lion and the wolf. Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, [and] Switzerland have remained independent for many centuries and will remain so, mainly because they have managed to elevate their civilization and culture to a higher level than in neighboring [and] very militant Germany.”⁸¹

During the economic crisis suggestions to increase the pace of national modernization gained much broader appeal among Lithuanian intellectuals and were discussed in the pages of the Catholic press. Importantly for us, Pakštas’s concern with the pace of national advancement was shared by Šalkauskis, who believed that cultural advancement was hindered by the authoritarian regime. The philosopher voiced his critique of the authoritarian regime most powerfully in his letter to Smetona, which was handed to him personally through a mutual acquaintance. Šalkauskis implied that the Smetona regime followed the collectivist trait of modern politics, unable to raise free and active citizens. Writing in November 1935, at the time when his former students were discussing a new political form, Šalkauskis argued that the present regime reproduced a servile mentality in society and called for immediate change. It was the fault of the authoritarian regime, Šalkauskis claimed, that “our society is drowned in an opportunistic lack of principles, passive servility, and selfish

⁸¹ Kazys Pakštas, “Lietuva lyginamosios civilizacijos atžvilgiu” [Lithuania in terms of comparative civilization], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 19, 413-8, here at: 413.

materialism.”⁸² Since the authoritarian rule was incapable of forming a broad coalition of society, Šalkauskis asserted, the state was dominated by unilateralism in the decision-making. Under a one-party regime, “one cannot speak neither about real organic social unity nor about the overcoming of the partisan spirit in the methods of governance.”⁸³ Šalkauskis made it clear that the present regime had to be changed for the nation to continue its cultural advancement. He frequently called for the creation of a new political order that would meet the “requirements of time,” believing that political innovations had to be introduced as soon as possible.⁸⁴

In the 1930s, both corporatist ideas and personalism in Lithuania gained traction as a part of wider discussions about national advancement, converting into the young Catholic intellectuals’ rethinking of the relationship between the state and society. These thinkers believed that the country lacked the necessary dynamism in its effort to catch up with the more advanced West. The “organic state” then had to unleash the creative energies of the nation, which they believed could be achieved through the reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and society. Thinking about the new order, they instrumentalized the distinction between the human “person” and the human “individual,” interpreting them as representing different aspects of human activity: the former meant the spiritual and cultural side, while the latter marked the social and economic; therefore, the corporatist order was meant to support the human “individual,” while the human “person,” the Young Catholics believed, had to gain autonomy from the state. At the same time, these Catholic intellectuals believed that

⁸² Stasys Šalkauskis, “Laiškas Prezidentui Antanui Smetonai” [The letter to the President Antanas Smetona], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 535.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 529.

⁸⁴ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Apie ‘darbo ir bendradarbiavimo programos projektą’” [On the ‘draft of the work and cooperation program’], *Rytas*, July 8, 1935, 3; July 9, 1935, 3-4.

the Lithuanian nation had the potential to succeed under the right conditions, where the interests of the nation would naturally guide it toward advancement.

3. 4. The Organic Order

The autumn of 1935 and subsequent winter of 1936 was the period of an intense intellectual effort of young Catholic intellectuals to conceptualize a new direction of Lithuanian modernization. In the autumn of 1935, this group formed a discussion circle, meeting regularly to discuss political topics, trying to conceptualize the most appropriate relationship between the state and society, which would be the most suitable for modernization. Every Sunday after mass in Saint Michael the Archangel Church, located in central Kaunas, they gathered at one of their homes to discuss the cultural and political problems of the day. Thus, the weekly meetings after Sunday services grew into an informal discussion club. Gathering at the different apartments of the authors, this group was looking for solutions to the current situation, trying to conceptualize the most appropriate relationship between the state and society.⁸⁵ Their discussions resulted in the jointly penned manifesto entitled “Towards the Creation of an Organic State.” As we shall see, the manifesto provided a certain blend of the ideas drawn from social Catholicism, Christian personalism as well as Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture.

⁸⁵ Juozas Eretas, *Kazys Pakštas: Tautinio šauklio odisėja* [Kazys Pakštas: Odyssey of the national herald] (Roma; Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1970), 93-5; Kęstutis Skrupskelis, “1936-ųjų metų deklaracija” [The manifesto of 1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2012, No. 6, 380-6; Kęstutis Skrupskelis “Tariamasis jaunųjų katalikų fašizmas” [The alleged fascism of the Young Catholics], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 1999, No. 4, 212-7; Ramūnas Labanauskas, “Jaunųjų katalikų sąjūdis: Politinės formavimosi aplinkybės 1935-1936 m.” [The Young Catholics’ movement: Background to political formation in 1935-1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 6-7, 248-57.

Even if the full list of participants remained not clear, almost all of them were certainly former students of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, who had taken up the agenda of the advancement of Lithuanian national culture conceptualized by Šalkauskis and Pakštas. (The latter joined these discussions on political order as well, and was among the signatories of their jointly written manifesto.) This was a diverse group that shared a general allegiance to Christianity, however, its members differed in their intellectual preferences. Therefore, it included Maceina, who had just come back from his years abroad and became a devoted reader of Berdyaev, and for example the philosopher Mantvydas, who did not depart too far from the Neo-Scholasticism promoted by his supervisor Kuraitis; interested in epistemological problems, Mantvydas wrote his doctoral thesis on the German philosopher Oswald Külpe, focusing on his critical realism that seemed to support the neo-scholastic positions against the neo-Kantian epistemology.⁸⁶ Others, like Dielininkaitis and Ivinskis, were not interested in philosophy at all, however, they too were familiar with Šalkauskis's ideas. The allegiance to Šalkauskis was the most obvious common denominator shared by the Young Catholics, as most of them were schooled in line with his pedagogical vision. At the same time, even if some of the authors were adherents of neo-Thomism, their sympathies did not translate into support for authoritarian solutions, as was often the case among the neo-scholastic thinkers, who emphasized the importance of order and authority in philosophy and politics alike.⁸⁷ Instead, their stance was much closer to the views of Šalkauskis, who linked

⁸⁶ Pranas Mantvydas, "Oswaldo Kiulpės kritiškasis realizmas" [Oswald Külpe's critical realism], *Raštai* [Writings], ed. Adolfas Poška (Vilnius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2005), 13-262.

⁸⁷ On this point see John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2022), 181. It was no coincidence that in France the main political representative of neo-Thomist ideas was the nationalist and authoritarian *Action Française*, see Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in Secular World: Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 53-6.

Catholicism to democracy and social progress, while also emphasizing the importance of national culture.

The group started informal meetings to discuss political topics, trying to conceptualize the most appropriate relationship between the state and society, which would be the most suitable for modernization. The Smetona regime was unacceptable to them in many respects, especially because of its cultural policy, which in their opinion was hampering the advancement of the nation:

An extremely serious moment in world history is staring our nation in the face. The wrath of the great neighbors and the sounds of a new global [*visuotinio*] war reverberate with a terrible echo in our land, and the spiritual nihilism and sharpening economic crisis are having an ever-increasing impact on our lives and threaten to undermine the young roots of our Independence. Such a moment calls for the mobilization of all the forces of the nation, [and] the straining of minds and wills. Today, the march of our nation must go in two directions: 1) *to master the present and 2) to open prospects for the future*.⁸⁸

They saw the authoritarian regime as an obstacle to the modernization of Lithuania. To overcome the backwardness, a new political form was needed that did not contradict the dynamic forces emerging in society; the state had to become “organic” in the sense that it had to evolve together with society: “State-making must never end,” the authors of the manifesto explained.⁸⁹

The final version of the manifesto cannot be identified with the position of any one intellectual. This is what we learn from the recollections of Maceina, which gives an insight into the composition of the manifesto. Maceina, who returned to Kaunas in the autumn of 1935 after his studies abroad, joined the discussions of this Catholic circle that were already taking place, so we do not know from him the circumstances of the circle’s origin. Reflecting on the discussion circle after many years, he asserted that

⁸⁸ “Į organiškiosios valstybės kūrybą” [Towards the creation of an organic state], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 552.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 554.

“[i]t is difficult to say today when it began to take shape. When I returned from abroad in 1935, after completing my studies, I found in Kaunas a group of people who had already prepared the outlines of a new concept of the state.”⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Maceina’s recollections are interesting because he gave a rather detailed account of the course of these discussions, allowing us to understand the specific way in which the manifesto was written: “The meetings took place [...] on Sundays after the 10 a.m. service at the Saint Michael the Archangel Church and lasted, as a rule, until 1 p.m. Their course was as follows: 1) to address a certain paragraph of the manifesto, 2) to speak up on the matter of this paragraph, 3) to search for a verbal expression acceptable to everyone. Spoke whoever wanted; usually each [of us], or at least most. In the end, we looked for the right expression, which would be acceptable to the participants of the meeting and would not hurt the thought itself.”⁹¹ It is clear from these reminiscences that the authorship of the manifesto cannot be attributed to any one individual. It was the result of a collective intellectual work, whose result was a compromise acceptable to each of the participants. Maceina explained that “it is truly a joint [*sutelktinis*] work in the literal sense of the word. I have never had to take part in such a clearly focused creation after the preparation of that manifesto. And this joint creation was because everyone knew that the manifesto would have to be signed and made public; as a result, everyone strived that the *whole* [content of the manifesto] would be and of *his own*.”⁹² As a side effect of such a collective effort, the manifesto lacked conceptual clarity, sometimes containing seemingly contradictory claims, which allowed a range of different interpretations.

⁹⁰ Antanas Maceina, “40 metų sukakties temomis” [On the topics of the 40th anniversary], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 14, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2008), 412-30, here at: 416.

⁹¹ Antanas Maceina, “Medžiaga Juozo Brazaičio monografijai: 1. Deklaracija ‘Į organiškiosios valstybės kūrybą,’” [Material for Juozas Brazaitis’s monograph: 1. Manifesto ‘Towards the creation of an organic state’], Box 181 Folder 74, Antanas Maceina fund, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania. As cited in Tatjana Maceinienė, *Ne tikrovės drumzlėse, o idealo šviesoje* [Not in the confusion of reality, but in the light of the ideal] (Vilnius: Katalikų pasaulis, 2004), 51.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 52.

The outcome of these discussions took the form of a manifesto entitled “Towards the Creation of an Organic State.” Its authors expressed their rejection of the previous forms of Lithuanian political life, negatively evaluating both the periods of liberal democracy and authoritarian rule. In their criticism of the Smetona regime, the authors did not simply suggest a return to the earlier period of democracy, which they associated with party politics and the dominance of partial interests. Their position contrasted with the attitudes of the older generation of Christian Democratic politicians, who now associated the parliamentary period with the golden age of Christian Democracy in Lithuania. The manifesto asserted that “[l]iberal democracy sometimes leads to anarchy and the dissipation of the nation’s creative energies into petty interests. Authoritarianism leads to stagnation and a stultification of the nation’s energy.”⁹³ Instead, the young Catholic intellectuals proposed a model of an organic state that resolved the opposition between individualism and collectivism believing that it offered a new form of solidarity within the national community: “Liberalism built the state for the individual. In authoritarianism, the individual lives for the state. The concept of an organic state resolves this opposition by distinguishing, in a sense, between human as an individual and human as a person.”⁹⁴ Therefore, they conceptualized a political order that was both anti-liberal and anti-authoritarian.

Their manifesto was a combination of transnationally popular ideas about the primacy of the human “person” as much as of the product of the home-grown philosophy of culture. While drawing inspiration from the French personalist thinkers, the authors of the manifesto remained close to the meaning of the human “person” that Šalkauskis proposed in his philosophy lectures. Concerned with national advancement, which

⁹³ “Į organiškiosios valstybės kūrybą” [Towards the creation of an organic state], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 554.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 555.

they believed was hindered by the authoritarian regime in Lithuania, they envisioned reclaiming the primacy of the human “person” would increase the pace of Lithuanian modernization: “Every creative act spring from the innermost depths of the person and is therefore autonomous. *The autonomy of cultural creativity is a fundamental condition for its existence and its value.* [...] But creativity takes place in the spiritual sphere independently of the state.”⁹⁵ Consequentially, the state’s powers over its citizens’ moral and spiritual life had to be restricted: “This is necessary so that every Lithuanian citizen can feel free to believe and confess the truths of their ideology, and to be able to independently deepen and develop them; so that every person who has broken away from any confession can freely and independently choose the path of a new worldview, that he would not be constrained in this choice, and therefore not feel a second-class citizen of the country.”⁹⁶ Guaranteeing autonomy from the state to the human “person,” who for the young Catholic intellectuals was the creator of culture, was one of the most important points of their manifesto.

While some historians asserted the affinity between the political orientation of the Young Catholics and Italian Fascism, a more careful reading of their writings reveals that these Lithuanian intellectuals were wary to differentiate between these two visions of the corporatist order. In Italy, Fascism emerged as a response to the challenge of communism, and the introduction of corporatism there served the suppression of trade unions, at the time dominated by communists; the Italian example showed that the corporatist order worked for the benefit of the industrialists at the expense of labor.⁹⁷ In Lithuania, meanwhile, Catholic thinkers were less concerned with communism than with national advancement, which they believed was hindered

⁹⁵ Ibid., 556.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 561.

⁹⁷ Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism: Its Origins and Development* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 58-72 and 79-82.

by the untrammelled individualism that manifested in modern society under liberalism and the free market. While the Young Catholics often deployed the terms also used by Italian Fascists, these were interpreted in a discordant manner. These Lithuanian thinkers sought cohesion in the national community, however, rejecting the authoritarian means to achieve it. They also dissociated their own envisioned organic state from the solidarity along the hierarchical line that was institutionalized in Fascist Italy and other authoritarian regimes. When it came to their embracement of the corporatist order, these Lithuanian thinkers envisioned corporations as an element that sprang from the bottom up.

The manifesto's authors studied attentively the model of the Italian corporatist state. Of all the Catholic intellectuals who participated in the discussions on new social and political order, Keliuotis seemed to be the most interested in Italian Fascism. Although he never suggested following the model of Italian Fascism in its entirety, he sometimes expressed his sympathy with some of its aspects. In his 1934 essay Keliuotis for example asserted that the education system under Fascism "does not deny the human personality but tries to give it the right direction and color," opposing it to the "mechanical" system of education in the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ As it was mentioned above, in the summer of 1935, Keliuotis even visited Italy, coming back to Lithuania with a positive impression of its corporatist order. Others, however, defined their vision of the state in direct opposition to the Italian model, which they differentiated from the 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Instead of following Italian Fascism, Maceina for instance referred to the German Jesuit Oswald Nell-Breuning, who was one of the ghost-writers behind the *Quadragesimo Anno* encyclical, defining the Italian corporatism and the Christian one as antithetical to one another: if the former

⁹⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, "Jaunoji Europa" [The young Europe], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1934, No. 166, 217-20; No. 167, 249-51; No. 172, 340-1; No. 174-175, 385-7; No. 176-177, 409-11.

subjected communities to the benevolence of the state, the latter was obliged to give communities autonomy and initiative. Maceina explained the difference between the organic and the totalist versions of corporatism referring to the example of Italy:

The corporate idea has nothing to do with the idea of the total state, either in its origin or in its essence. However, the totalist tendencies of the state very often choose the corporation as the means to realize their totalism. [...] But *this transformation of the corporation into an instrument in the hands of the totalist state* destroys the very nature of the corporation. *The basic and essential characteristic of the corporation is its naturalness and organic quality.* Whereas the total state, by creating corporations to carry out its totality, inevitably creates them artificially and mechanically. The corporations of the totalitarian state are not organisms but *mechanisms*. In this, they are fundamentally different from naturally grown organic corporations. If, therefore, in Italy, for example, the aspirations of the totalist state are very often channeled through the corporations, then at the same time this totalist state destroys the true nature of corporations.⁹⁹

Maceina, therefore, claimed that the state under Fascist rule did not recognize natural communities. The same was true in the case of Dielininkaitis, who described Italy as a totalist state where corporations took the form of extreme centralization and the abolition of the autonomy of social and cultural organizations.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the final version of the manifesto had a line that evidently differed from the famous formula used by the propagandists of the Fascist regime that “All was for the state, nothing outside the state, no one against the state,” which summed up the fascist conception of the state and was well-known at the time.¹⁰¹ Instead of emphasizing the centrality of the state to all political, social, and economic relations, as Italian Fascists did, the authors of the manifesto stressed the primacy of the human “person” that was above the coercive means of the state: “Man, as a person, is a higher element than the civic life, and therefore above the State. The State is subordinated to the human personality.

⁹⁹ Antanas Maceina, “Korporacijos problema” [The problem of corporation], *Tiesos kelias*, 1935, No. 12, 639-55.

¹⁰⁰ Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Korporacinė santvarka: Jos supratimas, bandymai realizuoti ir du pagrindiniai tipai* [The corporatist order: Its understanding, attempts to realize, and two main types] (Kaunas: Šviesos bendrovė, 1936), 374.

¹⁰¹ For corporatist economic reforms in Fascist Italy see Philip Morgan, “Corporatism and the Economic Order,” *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. R. J. B. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 150-65.

In the life of the State, everything begins with the individual, everything converges on the State, and everything returns to the human personality.”¹⁰²

Dielininkaitis, who was the main theorist of corporatism among the authors of the manifesto, distrusted the political forms of corporatism, perceiving corporatist reforms implemented by fascist and authoritarian states, which often coincided with the abolition of trade unions and the restriction of political rights, as opposing the very idea of corporatism. He differentiated between the statist and communal versions of corporatism, arguing for the latter: trade unions were to emanate out of the private initiative, not to be created and dominated by the state. Therefore, for instance, he criticized the corporatist reforms of the Smetona regime, which he labeled as pseudo-corporatism.¹⁰³ Dielininkaitis associated “organic” quality with self-organization from below: “When today one says that the state must be organic, it means *that it should be created and managed not artificially, atomistic and mechanically, but following the nature of the social elements that make it up.*”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, corporations had to provide a framework in which the primacy of the human “person” was reconciled with the demands of the common good, with both individualism and statism being rejected.

Dielininkaitis envisioned the strong presence of free trade unions that would solve social conflicts and simultaneously constrain the egoistic tendencies of individuals. Therefore, looking at the results of corporatist experiments in Portugal and Austria, he asserted that after these reforms “one can experience the inadequacy

¹⁰² “Į organiškiosios valstybės kūrybą” [Towards the creation of an organic state], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 555.

¹⁰³ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Krikščionių darbininkų suvažiavimo išvakarėse” [On the eve of the congress of Christian workers], *Rytas*, April 14, 1934, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Korporatyvinė santvarka organiškoje valstybėje” [The corporatist order in an organic state], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1936, No. 14, 318-9, here at: 319.

[*nepakankamumas*] of the statist corporatism.”¹⁰⁵ Instead, Dielininkaitis singled out the positive examples of corporatism from democratic states: Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, as well as the United States, where the New Deal order initiated by Franklin Roosevelt’s reforms possessed certain corporatist features; in all of these countries corporatism, he stressed, served for expansion of free private initiative: “[t]he state does not seek to be represented or to have a decisive influence in every corporate body. There it does not so much directly act as it encourages, harmonizes, controls.”¹⁰⁶ For Dielininkaitis, these were the models to follow in Lithuania, where corporations had to become the organs of self-government for issues related to specific professions. His ideas suggest that the manifesto was an attempt to conceptualize a way in which the different social and economic groups would cooperate to resolve tensions between them while at the same time maintaining their autonomy from the state.

The metaphor of organic order was very much the language of the day, fashionable among intellectuals all over Europe. Their vision of the organic order, however, must not be confused with the vision of society as a biological organism, as they explicitly rejected comparisons between social and biological life.¹⁰⁷ In the usage of the Young Catholics, the adjective “organic” implied that the people were the real agents of progress, and their interests had to be accommodated by state bureaucracies and politicians in the decision-making. This understanding of the relationship between the state and the people meant that the state was bound to continuously readjust to the changes in the society, where the power was dispersed among the representatives of

¹⁰⁵ Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Korporacinė santvarka: Jos supratimas, bandymai realizuoti ir du pagrindiniai tipai* [The corporatist order: Its understanding, attempts to realize, and two main types] (Kaunas: Šviesos bendrovė, 1936), 355.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Korporatyvinė santvarka organiškoje valstybėje” [Corporatist order in an organic state], *Naujoji Romuva*, No. 14, 318-9.

different social groups; the “organic” signified the active element that bound people from within. Instead of socially cohesive state that fascists aimed for, the Young Catholics sought to achieve unity while preserving social diversity.

The “organic” state could only be understood in connection with its counter-concept, the “mechanical” state; while the former acknowledged the people as the dynamic element, the latter imposed its will on the citizens. In the pages of *Židinys* a short explanation of the organic view of the state was published, summarizing the ideas of the German Catholic legal theorist Heinrich Rommen’s *Der Staat in der katholischen Gedankenwelt* (1935), which highlighted precisely this point: “For the community and its natural associations, the State only provides the foundations of positive law, but it does not create them. It discovers them. [...] Therefore, in the organic understanding of the State, the State encompasses, protects, and guards the organizations and individuals subject to it; it does not abolish the pre-existing individual personality, the family, the community, the community, the professional gatherings, etc.”¹⁰⁸ Following the same line, Dielininkaitis asserted that mechanical regimes gained authoritarian and totalitarian forms, and “relied on a system of public law which was characterized by a failure to recognize the rights of the citizen but emphasized the rights of the state and the duties of the citizen.”¹⁰⁹ Differently than these, an organic state, he asserted, acknowledged the dynamism of modern society, accommodating to the will of the people, understood as the cluster of different social and ideological groups and therefore diverse in its composition. Drawing on Maurice Defourny, a neo-scholastic sociologist who taught at the University of Leuven, Dielininkaitis explained: “This conception of the state recognizes that the state is not so much made up of individual

¹⁰⁸ “Organiškos valstybės koncepcija” [The conception of an organic state], *Židinys*, 1936, No. 2, 231-2.

¹⁰⁹ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Korporatyvinė santvarka organiškoje valstybėje” [Corporatist order in an organic state], *Naujoji Romuva*, No. 14, 318-9.

human beings, but of human beings who are already outside the state, interconnected by natural and spontaneous bonds.”¹¹⁰

The authors of the manifesto imagined that Christian spirituality could create unity and protect society from the disintegration that characterized modern life. The manifesto pronounced love as the basic principle of civic life that could reconcile all the antinomies of modern society: “*Love is the greatest factor of social progress and political unity,*” which “counterbalances, improves and sustains the external imperfections of social relations. It is always struggling for greater justice and for a more perfect order. It builds social institutions and suppresses the struggles of section, party, and ideology.”¹¹¹ Christian spirituality, they believed, could unite politically, ideologically, and economically fragmented population, permeating it from within but avoiding the coercive means of the authoritarian and totalitarian states. Drawing on the tradition of Catholic anti-liberalism, the Young Catholics imagined an anti-statist vision of modernity, in which the power of party politics would be limited, allowing society itself to develop in the “organic” way.

The Young Catholics remained vague on the particularities of their proposed order, and it is certainly easier to understand what they were against than what they were for. The generational divide played an important role in shaping their views. Reflecting on this moment of the 1930s, Maceina later explained that “we all had the belief that we were gradually taking over the tasks of the older generation. True, we felt that we grew from the older generation, but at the same time that we had already passed it and

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Į organiškiosios valstybės kūrybą” [Towards the creation of an organic state], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 559.

going on our own paths.”¹¹² These young Catholic intellectuals saw a gap between themselves and the politicians of the Christian Democrat party, among whom, Maceina suggested, “there were also those with whom conversation was impossible.”¹¹³ While some of their pronouncements were forward-looking, others were noticeably conservative. Their visions of social order for instance were dominated by the vision of the husband as the breadwinner, with the wife staying at home to look after the large family.¹¹⁴ Consequently, in their later suggestions for the improvement of social order, they thought of family allowances, which would ensure a decent living for families, a proposal that was not unlike the Catholic reforms of Salazar in Portugal and Dollfuss in Austria.¹¹⁵

The collaborative nature of writing had a moderating impact on the ideas expressed in the manifesto, writing off all the ideas that may seem too radical for some of the participants. Instead of calling for a spiritual and moral “revolution,” the manifesto envisioned the restriction of the statist tendencies of the state. Noteworthy, while in some of their other writings the Young Catholics, such as Maceina or Dielininkaitis, attacked the bourgeois spirit as the cause of the moral decay and addressed the problems of social inequality, the manifesto lacked overly radical suggestions. Writing in the winter of 1935 and early 1936, the authors of the manifesto did not express ambition for an urgent change in the understanding of man, the aspect that was

¹¹² Cited in Tatjana Maceinienė, *Ne tikrovės drumzlėse, o idealo šviesoj* [Not in the confusion of reality, but in the light of the ideal] (Vilnius: Katalikų pasaulis, 2004), 62.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Pastarųjų dienų bandymai socialinį klausimą sušvelninti” [Recent attempts to mitigate the social question], *Židinys*, 1938, No. 2, 182-8; Antanas Maceina, *Socijalinis teisingumas: Kapitalizmo žlugimas ir naujos santvarkos socialiniai principai* [Social justice: The collapse of capitalism and the social principles of new order] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1938), 187.

¹¹⁵ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2022), 199-200.

strongly expressed by the French “non-conformist” thinkers.¹¹⁶ Thus, despite the emphasis on the primacy of the person, the manifesto did not provide any conception of a new man. For them, the primacy of the person meant the limitation of the state’s power over social groups. The human “individual” was the economic man, and the human “person” was a man as the creator of culture. They suggested that the interfering state that controlled society from the center was the main obstacle that prevented the Lithuanian nation from unleashing its cultural potential. The recognition of the primacy of the human “person” for them meant the replacement of state control with private initiative.

Concerned with national advancement, the authors of the manifesto aimed to reduce the impact of party politics on social and cultural life, while they simultaneously asserted that the executive powers had to be strengthened. Their manifesto lacked a substantive discussion on the arrangement of the political sphere because their main goal was to conceptualize an order in which social groups would gain greater autonomy from political life. At the same time, they did not reject the principle of popular representation, envisioning party politics and parliamentarism as part of the new order; however, the Young Catholics seemingly reduced politics into technocratic policymaking, allowing social and ideological groups to regulate their own workings. The manifesto for instance proclaimed that “[i]deological and religious matters should be independent of the political institutions of the country, where the political affairs of the country would be concentrated.”¹¹⁷ The state had to be constrained by delegating power to the representatives of pillarized interest groups. The introduction

¹¹⁶ Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 120.

¹¹⁷ “Į organiškiosios valstybės kūrybą” [Towards the creation of an organic state], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 561.

of cultural autonomy for instance had to limit the power of the parliament, depoliticizing questions that until then were hotly debated among different political groups, most importantly the questions of religious schooling.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, professional corporations, the authors indicated, would rise from the bottom up to form the General Council of Corporations, a quasi-parliamentary body independent from the parliament. Therefore, the powers of the parliament, which the Young Catholics asserted had to be restored, would be considerably limited, in this way eliminating or at least significantly reducing the possibility of ideological strife, which permeated parliamentary politics during the democratic period of the 1920s. Through these political reforms, the Young Catholics sought to find the right balance between the state and the individual, as well as between the state and culture, proposing a vision of political order that was antithetical to both liberalism and authoritarianism. At the same time, they stressed the need for a strong executive government and a legal framework that would ensure equal rights of participation for every social group in civic life. In their vision of the state, it seemed, the Young Catholics remained close to Šalkauskis's advocated ideas.

3. 5. When the Manifesto Was Published

After the manifesto was published, its authors were seen by many as a united intellectual force representing distinctive ideological commitments. At the same time, the publication of the manifesto was shrouded in some uncertainty, as it was not

¹¹⁸ Dangiras Mačiulis, *Tautinė mokykla: Žvilgsnis į tautininkų švietimo politiką* [The national school: A look at the educational policy of the *Tautininkai*] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2017), 15-90; Dangiras Mačiulis, "Kultūrinės autonomijos idėja ir katalikiško švietimo sistema tarpukario Lietuvoje (1918-1940 m.)" [The idea of cultural autonomy and the system of Catholic education in interwar Lithuania, 1918-1940], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*, vol. 35 (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų akademija, 2011), 75-112.

entirely clear what the Young Catholics were aiming for: to invite the leaders and intellectuals of the authoritarian regime to discuss a new model of political order or to establish themselves an intellectual opposition to the regime, which has led historians to different conclusions.¹¹⁹ This was because the manifesto was not intended to be a practical guide that could be readily used in political life, but rather as a document that expressed only the general principles the authors advocated. Following its publication, the authors promoted their vision of the state in a series of public lectures that were organized in March 1936, inviting the audiences in Kaunas to listen to their presentations on the corporatist order: “The Concept of Corporatism and Its Relevance to Our Times,” “The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church and Corporatism,” “Corporatism in the Past,” “Attempts to Carry Out Corporative Order in Portugal and Switzerland,” “The Experiments of Corporatism in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland,” and “The Corporatist Order and Lithuania.”¹²⁰ The ideas expressed in the manifesto received a wide response from Kaunas intellectuals, however, the Young Catholics found few allies.

Both the Christian Democrats and the supporters of the Smetona regime were skeptical about the ideas of the young Catholic intellectuals. Bistras, who defended the Christian Democratic positions, for instance, rejected outright their vision of the state, attacking its corporatist element: “Let us not shy away from the new, let us seek new paths, but let us never give in to illusions. Let us not think that by saying the word ‘corporatism’ we are bringing salvation to humanity.” He concluded that “the more

¹¹⁹ Cf. Dangiras Mačiulis, “*Naujosios Romuvos trajektorija: Nuo tautos vienybės projekto iki kultūrinės saviizoliacijos* [The trajectory of *Naujoji Romuva*: From the project of national unity to cultural self-isolation], *Darbai ir dienos* 38 (2004): 17-48; Algimantas Jankauskas and Alvydas Jokubaitis, “Tarp individualizmo ir kolektyvizmo: politiškumo paieškos tarpukario Lietuvoje” [Between individualism and collectivism: The search for the political in interwar Lithuania], *Politinės minties Lietuvoje antologija* [The anthology of political thought in Lithuania], vol. 1, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2012), 13-26, here at: 16.

¹²⁰ “Ciklas paskaitų apie korporatizmą” [A series of lectures on corporatism], *Rytas*, March 13, 1936, 7.

corporations there are, the greater the chaos and anarchy.”¹²¹ It was clear that the two sides had starkly different visions, and their differences proved difficult to reconcile. The Young Catholics saw their advocated new institutional configuration as a means to resolve the most adverse ideological disagreements that plagued interwar political life and bring cultural advancement, while the Christian Democrats argued for a return to the parliamentary order of the 1920s. The antagonism between the two groups would be carried over into the postwar years and in different forms would last for decades.¹²²

While the Christian Democrats advocated for the restoration of popular representation in the form of parliament, the supporters of the authoritarian regime stressed that the current regime already represented the whole nation and that changes along the lines suggested by the Young Catholics were not necessary or even desirable. The criticism from the young intellectuals of the National Union focused on the distinction between the human “person” and the human “individual,” which was frequently attacked as an artificial abstraction that was inapplicable in political practice. One author, for instance, suggested, “by grounding their reasoning not on a particular man, not on his nature, but on the abstract personality and unrestricted freedom, [the authors of the manifesto] have gone too far on the path of decentralization and all kinds of autonomy.”¹²³ Another one doubted if the state could ever be neutral concerning the

¹²¹ As quoted in Ramūnas Labanauskas, “Jaunujų katalikų sąjūdis: Politinės formavimosi aplinkybės 1935-1936 m.” [The Young Catholics’ movement: Background to political formation in 1935-1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 6-7, 248-57, here at: 253.

¹²² Justinas Dementavičius, “Cultural versus Political Christian Democrats: Debating the Idea of (Christian) Democracy in Lithuanian Exile,” *Political Exile in the Global Twentieth Century: Catholic Christian Democrats in Europe and the Americas*, ed. by Piotr H. Kosicki and Wolfram Kaiser (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021), 197-206.

¹²³ Adomas Majauskas, “Krizė, moralinis pakrikimas, demokratija, laisvė” [Crisis, moral disorder, democracy, freedom], *Vairas*, 1936, No. 3, 323-5, here at: 325.

ideological groupings of society, as was envisioned in the manifesto.¹²⁴ Yet another one described the vision of the Young Catholics as “too much liberal and individualist, and in some respects going even further,” suggesting that there was no practical difference between the human “person” and the human “individual;” “[h]ence, in an organic state the individual only takes from the state, without giving anything back to it.”¹²⁵ For this author, the order envisioned in the manifesto was a way back to the parliamentary period of the 1920s, as the title of his article suggested. They all tended to believe that the pluralism that the Young Catholic promoted could only hinder national progress destroying the unity of the state. Contrary to the Young Catholics, these intellectuals believed that the nation should be united around a single party.¹²⁶ None of them, however, attacked the corporatist element of the manifesto, indicating that this was a point on which both sides seemed to agree. All these critical accounts shared the affirmation of the claim of the Smetona regime to represent the collective will of the nation: the regime, they asserted, through the abolition of party politics ensured solidarity between the different parts of society.

For our purposes, it is important to note the stance that was taken in this debate by the philosopher Izidorius Tamošaitis (1889–1943), who was the chief editor of an important cultural journal ideologically associated with the National Union party, *Vairas* (*The Helm*). After the coup of 1926, Tamošaitis became the main ideologist of

¹²⁴ Vincas Rastenis, “Kas toji ‘Naujosios Romuvos’ organinė valstybė?” [What is that organic state of *Naujoji Romuva*?], *Mūsų kraštas*, March 6, 1936, 8; April 10, 1936, 8; April 17, 1936, 6; May 1, 1936, 6.

¹²⁵ Vladas Juodeika, “Organinė valstybė – kelias atgal” [An organic state – a way back], the evening edition of *Lietuvos aidas*, May 5, 1936, 5.

¹²⁶ Justinas Dementavičius, *Tarp ūkininko ir piliečio: Modernėjančios Lietuvos politinės minties istorija* [Between farmer and citizen: A history of modernising Lithuanian political thought] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2015), 184-95.

the authoritarian regime and a member of Smetona's closest circle of acolytes.¹²⁷ Tamošaitis's position allows us to place the "organic state" of the Young Catholics against the backdrop of the political vision of the closest circle of the National Union party leadership. In philosophy, he was fascinated by Max Scheler, in social theory by Othmar Spann, and in politics by Italian Fascism. A proponent of Lithuanian authoritarianism, Tamošaitis asserted that every political, economic, and confessional group as well as separate individuals had to be subordinated to the state, if necessary, even by the means of violence.¹²⁸ Although he did not write an extensive critique of the Young Catholics' views, some of his remarks indicated that Tamošaitis saw the manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State" as representing the major shortcoming of modern thought, which, following Descartes, divided the human being into mind and body; this mistaken conception of man, Tamošaitis believed, was one of the major causes of the problems of contemporary political life.¹²⁹

Commenting on the manifesto, Tamošaitis asserted that the division of man into the "individual" and the "person" was incompatible with the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, and consequently with the teachings of the Catholic Church: "In life, we meet a living human being. He has a body and soul. Could a living person be so radically divided into the individual (body) subjugated to the state and the spirit (personality) that is above the state? It seems to us that such a radical division of the living human into the individual and the personality is not entirely compatible with the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, and at the same time with the official science of the

¹²⁷ For more on Tamošaitis's position in the regime see Alfonsas Eidintas, *Antanas Smetona and His Lithuania: From the National Liberation Movement to an Authoritarian Regime (1893-1940)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 226-45.

¹²⁸ Izidorius Tamošaitis, "Teoriškos ir praktiškos valstybinio gyvenimo linkmės" [The theoretical and practical directions of political life], *Vairas*, No. 11, 1931, 275-85.

¹²⁹ For his characterization of the history of modern philosophy see Izidorius Tamošaitis, "Dabarties krizė – žmogaus supratimo krizė" [The crisis of the present is a crisis of the understanding of man], *Rinktiniai filosofiniai raštai* [Selected philosophical writings], ed. Gažina Pranckietytė (Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2010), 137-44.

Catholic Church.”¹³⁰ As a professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Kaunas, Tamošaitis taught a class on Aquinas’ social theory, developing an interpretation of the Angelic Doctor that was in line with his own authoritarian sympathies. He asserted the interest of the state had to be aligned with the interest of the individual, in this way reconciling the objective and the subjective: “the will of good men is identical with the law, as Thomas Aquinas says.”¹³¹ For Tamošaitis, discipline and hierarchy were necessary components of the organization of the state. He, therefore, doubted if citizens could remain autonomous from the state oversight, attacking the distinction between the “person” and the “individual” even on theological grounds: “The science of the Catholic Church proclaims that after the first sin man is wounded in both the realms of cognition (reason) and will. So, it would be difficult to talk about unlimited personal freedoms.”¹³² In other words, man was corrupted by nature and therefore could not be left alone without supervision. Predictably, the rejection of the distinction between the “individual” and the “person” served for Tamošaitis to assert the authority of the state over its citizens. In his sporadic comments on the manifesto, Tamošaitis implied that its authors did not provide a satisfactory conception of the state, because, just like liberals, they allowed man to have autonomy from the state: “if man, as personality, is above civic and political life, it is clear that his – as personality – freedom also is above civic and political life.”¹³³ Meanwhile, the Smetona regime, Tamošaitis believed, provided the means to solve the problems of modern politics. Therefore, when discussing the

¹³⁰ Izidorius Tamošaitis, “Diskvalifikuotojo žodis diskvalifikatoriui” [The word of the disqualified to the disqualifier], *Vairas*, 1936, No. 7-8, 843-6, here at: 845.

¹³¹ Izidorius Tamošaitis, “Asmuo ir bendruomenė” [The person and community], *Rinktiniai filosofiniai raštai* [Selected philosophical writings], ed. Gažina Pranckietytė (Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2010), 377-88, here at: 387.

¹³² Izidorius Tamošaitis, “Diskvalifikuotojo žodis diskvalifikatoriui” [The word of the disqualified to the disqualifier], *Vairas*, 1936, No. 7-8, 843-6, here at: 845.

¹³³ Izidorius Tamošaitis, “Dar vienas užpultojo žodelis” [Another word of the attacked], *Vairas*, 1936, No. 9, 91-5, here at: 93.

ideology of the *Tautininkai* party, Tamošaitis made it clear that “we are talking about a concrete man, not about the division of that man into the individual and the personality.”¹³⁴

Even for the authors of the manifesto themselves, it was not entirely clear how the distinction between the human “person” and the human “individual” was supposed to work in practice, as can be seen from Maceina’s attempt to clarify the manifesto authors’ position on the issue. As the foremost scholar of Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture, in his article entitled “The Individual-Person and the State” Maceina explicated the political implications of the distinction between the “person” and the “individual,” making concrete suggestions as to how this distinction could work in political life. “The personalist principle,” according to Maceina, “protects the state from the one-sidedness of liberalism and authoritarianism and fruitfully resolves the now increasingly acute conflict between the individual and the state.”¹³⁵ Despite such assured claims, Maceina’s statements introduced even more confusion, him recognizing that “the finer matters of practical life are very often so intricate that it is difficult to trace in which element of the human being [the “person” or the “individual”] their roots lie.”¹³⁶ Maceina asserted that the distinction served to differentiate the spiritual and the material as two domains that had to be treated differently: “[f]reedoms of conscience, thought, and creativity are the basic requirements of an organic state,” while matters of wealth and birth should be regulated by the state. However, the line between the “person” and the “individual” was a thin one, as it was evident from Maceina’s practical examples: he, for example,

¹³⁴ Izidorius Tamošaitis, “Tautininkų ideologijos gairės” [The outline of the *Tautininkai* ideology], *Vairas*, 1937, No. 6, 135.

¹³⁵ Antanas Maceina, “Individas-asmuo ir valstybė” [The individual-person and the state], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 12, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2007), 38-51, here at: 48.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-1.

suggested that “[t]he State may regulate by its policy the reproduction of families” as well as “may prohibit illicit procreation, may forbid the marriage of the unhealthy and may punish the violation of these prohibitions,” while simultaneously rejecting forced sterilization, a policy that was embraced in Nazi Germany.¹³⁷ These latter statements indicated that limiting the state in the domain of culture was consistent with using its power over social groups to promote families. More than anything else, this article by Maceina was a good indication that in the Young Catholics’ vision of new order, their national and religious commitments overlapped, not only in their assertion of the importance of Christianity for national progress but also in their advocacy of the importance of the state in ensuring that key Catholic commitments were upheld in society at large. Maceina’s reasoning indicated that in the new order, Christian commitments would be preserved through the state’s commitment to respect the personalist principle, showing the concept of the human “person,” far from being neutral, served to infuse the policies of the state with a religious dimension.¹³⁸

While the manifesto received criticisms from many sides, Šalkauskis, on the other hand, welcomed its publication, seeing the affinity between his ideas and those of the young Catholic intellectuals: “I want to emphasize that our paths are joined in one broad way. There is no need for me to join your movement because I have already been at the origin of it. [...] But until now my path has been almost that of a loner. Now I have become more courageous and joyful, seeing that around what I was concerned about a beautiful circle of mainly young forces has gathered, promising much for our people and our country. I extend my hand to you and say: from now on,

¹³⁷ Ibid., 49-50.

¹³⁸ Similar conclusions were made by scholars working on the post-war conceptualization of human rights, which was substantially shaped by Catholic thinkers. See in particular Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

let us march together towards a happier future for our nation!”¹³⁹ He endorsed his former students’ ideas, even if noting a certain lack of precision: “Some of the individual ideas of the manifesto can also be considered questionable or even insufficiently precise. But on the whole, I find the manifesto of *romuviečiai* quite acceptable.”¹⁴⁰ For him, an organic state represented the bringing of unity within society but without abolishing differences between its constituent parts. He believed that Catholicism could achieve it, finding a truly democratic political form. Just like in his philosophical writings, in his public interventions Šalkauskis repeatedly inferred the universal character of Catholicism, asserting that it was incompatible with one-sidedness and exclusivism: “No exclusivism can find a place in the Catholic worldview,” he explained on one occasion, “because it is not intrinsically linked to any time, to any nation, to any social group. In this sense it is transcendent. And at the same time, every one-sidedness that contains even a fragment of truth is organically absorbed into its universal synthesis.”¹⁴¹

Šalkauskis’s endorsement of the manifesto rightly led historians to assert the affinity between the ideas advocated by Šalkauskis and his students.¹⁴² At the same time, Šalkauskis seemingly differed from the Young Catholics by his greater emphasis on pluralism and democracy. Drawing on Maritain, Šalkauskis asserted that the Young Catholics advocated for “organic democracy,” even if they did not use these terms in the manifesto. Their political vision, he claimed, synthesized pluralism and authority,

¹³⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Romuviečių deklaracija” [The manifesto of *romuviečiai*], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 577.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 575.

¹⁴¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Ideologiniai dabarties krizių pagrindai ir katalikų pasaulėžiūra” [The ideological foundations of contemporary crises and the Catholic worldview], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 66.

¹⁴² Kęstutis Girnius, and Alvydas Jokubaitis, Laurynas Peluritis, “Pilnutinė demokratija: Kūrėjai, pamatinės idėjos, vertinimai” [Integral democracy: Founders, fundamental ideas, assessments], *Lietuva, kurios nebuvo: Pilnutinės demokratijos svarstymai ir vertinimai*., eds. Kęstutis Girnius, et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2016), 9-34, here at: 19.

expressing the anti-totalitarian tendency of their political vision. Therefore, the state that the Young Catholics envisioned, he asserted, should not be confused with the political form institutionalized in Fascist Italy. Although the Young Catholics used similar terms to those used by the ideologues of the Fascist regime, their organic state with its rejection of the statist model greatly differed from the Italian order: “The Fascists, for example, call their totalitarian state an organic democracy; but it is very different from the model of the state outlined by *romuviečiai*.”¹⁴³ Despite the possible differences, after the publication of the manifesto, Šalkauskis appeared to affirm the political vision of his former students.

The publication of the manifesto symbolized the emergence of the Young Catholics into the foremost ranks of Catholic intellectuals. Nothing illustrates this change better than the launching of a new newspaper by these intellectuals in the early summer of 1936. When in June 1936, the authoritarian regime temporarily suspended publishing of the Christian Democrat newspaper *Rytas*, the circle of Catholic intellectuals that included Ambrazevičius, Dielininkaitis, Grinius, Ivinskis, Maceina, Skrupskelis, and Yla, all of whom participated in the writing of the manifesto, took advantage of the circumstances. The core was joined by Keliuotis, who remained the chief editor of *Naujoji Romuva*, and the father Juozas Prunskis (1907–2003), who was trusted with administrative tasks. With the mediation of the neo-scholastic philosopher Kuraitis, they secured the favor of the Archbishop Juozapas Skvireckas, which allowed them to take over the editorial office of *Rytas*.¹⁴⁴ Under these circumstances, the publishing of the Christian Democrat *Rytas* was discontinued permanently, and only three weeks

¹⁴³ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Romuviečių deklaracija” [The manifesto of *romuviečiai*], Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 5, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1996), 570.

¹⁴⁴ Ramūnas Labanauskas, “Jaunųjų katalikų sąjūdis: Politinės formavimosi aplinkybės 1935–1936 m.” [The Young Catholic movement: Background to political formation in 1935–1936], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 6-7, 248–57, here at: 255; Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ignas Skrupskelis: Asmenybė ir laikmetis* [Ignas Skrupskelis: Personality and times] (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014) 281–91.

after its last issue a new daily was launched under the name *XX Amžius* (*The Twentieth Century*). The emergence of this newspaper was marked by a certain symbolism – the Christian Democrat *Rytas*, founded and run by Catholic intellectuals that belonged to the older generation, was closed for the young Catholic intellectuals to launch their outlet. This was the moment when Šalkauskis’s former students emerged as the most important representatives of Catholicism in Lithuania.

By launching their newspaper, the Young Catholics declared their aim to elevate the cultural level of the nation, contributing to its advancement. The first editorial of *XX Amžius* explained that the current pace of national advancement in other countries has meant that Lithuanians had “*to turn our cultural clock hundred years forward.*”¹⁴⁵ By choosing the title of the newspaper, which was picked from the Catholic daily in Belgium *Le Vingtième Siècle*, its editors emphasized the newspaper’s modern character, them committing to informing about the most important developments in European public life and proposing ideas for the cultural advancement of the Lithuanian nation. The current age, the Young Catholics asserted, impressed with the dynamism of new ideas and emerging movements, therefore, the newspaper “will try to understand and feel the contrasting dynamism of this twentieth century.”¹⁴⁶ Its editors committed to discussing “every good manifestation of culture” that could serve as an example for the Lithuanian nation. At the same time, they asserted that Catholicism must remain an essential part of modern Lithuania: new ideas had to serve both the “independent culture of Lithuanian nation and the Catholic religion,” because “every culture is meaningful only when it is created together with religion. Religion fills in the gaps in culture; it helps to avoid the crises of culture or at least to

¹⁴⁵ “Redakcijos žodis” [Editorial word], *XX amžius*, June 24, 1936, 1.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

go through them easier.”¹⁴⁷ This was a vision of national modernity built on the principles of Christianity.

An important feature of the Young Catholics’ agenda was their dissociation from the legacy of party politics, rejecting the political distinction between the left and the right. These young intellectuals repeatedly asserted that culture and religion were above politics: “*XX Amžius* is not affiliated with any political group. The two guiding principles – religion and Lithuanian culture – are higher than party politics of one kind or another.”¹⁴⁸ The young Catholic intellectuals aimed to represent a new kind of public culture, the one that transcended party quarrels and aimed at a “positive” creation of national culture; therefore, they stressed the need to overcome the fractional interests in favor of the common welfare. Just like in their manifesto “Towards the Creation of Organic State,” in the newspaper the Young Catholics emphasized impartiality; if previously *Rytas* maintained the Christian Democrat line, then *XX Amžius*, the newspaper that appeared in the place of *Rytas*, declared itself to be non-partisan.¹⁴⁹ In one of the first essays published by *XX Amžius* Keliuotis asserted the primacy of national culture, indicating the main line of the newspaper: “So what do we need to take care of the most? Where is the path that would lead us to depth and creativity? What would ignite our battles with enthusiasm and idealism? What could bring all Lithuanians to collective marches of an idea? There is one short answer to all these questions – *Lithuanian culture*.”¹⁵⁰ In the pursuit of national advancement, the Young Catholics believed, political differences had to be irrelevant;

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ignas Skrupskelis: Asmenybė ir laikmetis* [Ignas Skrupskelis: Personality and times] (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014), 259.

¹⁵⁰ Juozas Keliuotis, “Rūpestis lietuviškąja kultūra” [Concern with Lithuanian culture], *XX amžius*, June 25, 1936, 3.

the representatives of every ideological group had to have equal opportunities to participate in civic life.

3. 6. Conclusions

The autumn of 1935 and subsequent winter of 1936 was a period of an intense intellectual effort of the young Catholic intellectuals to respond to the discussions on new directions of Lithuanian modernization. Just like Šalkauskis, they were concerned with national culture and religion, believing that Catholicism was beneficial for the state. One of their underlying goals was to find a way to achieve solidarity within the national community, which would be neither liberal nor authoritarian. As I show, they believed that society had to be defended against the damaging effects of political life, and the power of party politics over society would be limited, allowing it to develop in an “organic” way. At the same time, the young Catholic intellectuals saw themselves as the representatives of a new kind of political culture that went beyond the political disagreements that were characteristic of the Lithuanian politics of the 1920s. Rejecting the logic of party politics, the Young Catholics distanced themselves from the legacy of the previous Christian Democratic Party.

Believing that the modernization of national culture required religious grounding, the Young Catholics looked for new ways to achieve solidarity within the national community. Simultaneously, they stressed the need to achieve a certain harmony between the state and society, which would enable to unleash the nation’s creative forces. Šalkauskis’s thought was the important intellectual resource of the Young Catholics’ political vision: corporatism, emphasis on the human “person,” and cultural autonomy were all derived from Šalkauskis’s writings. The fusion of corporatism and

personalism, however, left their vision open to different contestations. Their manifesto had the same weakness as other similar projects of Catholic intellectuals of the interwar period – conceptual vagueness and an unclear relationship with political practice. They were content with general principles, which had to serve as a guideline for further discussions, however, it remained unclear how an organic state would have functioned in practice, and no amount of analysis could bring a definitive answer on the contours of the political order that they envisioned. The manifesto, on the other hand, was an important document not only because of the political vision that it expressed but also because it showed a larger pattern of the Young Catholics' thought – their rejection of both liberalism and authoritarianism, in the name of a Christian-inspired order. Their envisioned state was infused with Christian spirituality that, they believed, would prevent the extremes of both individualism and collectivism. This state that was based on Catholic principles, however, should be open to non-Catholics to participate in the civic and social life on equal terms. The Young Catholics' vision of an organic state, it seemed, pointed towards modern national culture and social harmony. They argued that an organic state should combine decentralized power and community participation, as opposed to the statist centralization that they associated with the Smetona regime.

The manifesto could be read as an attempt to translate Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture and the Catholic social doctrine more generally into a political vision that may be accepted by a secular intellectual. It remained one of the most impressive conceptualizations of the political order in interwar Lithuania, even if it had no immediate impact on the political life of Lithuania. While the ideas expressed in the manifesto have not been continued and quite soon this initiative died out, it was a good reflection of the ideas of the young generation of Lithuanian conservative

intelligentsia during the 1930s. It also reflected how Catholic intellectuals' concerns with secular modernity were aligned with their vision of the nation and its cultural and moral advancement.

4. Facing the Crisis

In the second half of the 1930s, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals grew increasingly concerned about the future of Europe and the uncertainties associated with the modernization of Lithuanian culture. This chapter therefore introduces the discussions on the crisis of European modernity among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers. Their concerns were not confined within Lithuania's borders; rather, they were deeply influenced by the rise of exclusive nationalism in the form of National Socialism and the looming threat of communism associated with the Comintern. The eruption of the Spanish Civil War together with the electoral success of the Popular Front in France had a major impact on Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals and their perceptions of modernity. These external forces exacerbated their sense of a profound "spiritual" crisis that had to be urgently addressed. Šalkauskis and the Young Catholics considered themselves engaged in a moral and spiritual battle, seeking to alter the spiritual orientation of modern man. These Lithuanian Catholic thinkers believed that all the visible manifestations of the present crisis had their roots in a deeper "spiritual" crisis. Consequently, they argued that the response to this crisis had to be spiritual in nature.

To understand the perspective of Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, it is important to examine their philosophical positions. In the early 1920s, this discipline of philosophy of culture was conceived by Šalkauskis with an inherent assumption that modern European culture was in crisis. In the mid-1930s, Maceina's lectures even asserted that the emergence of a philosophy of culture in modern times was indicative of the problematic relationship between man and modern culture. By that time, Lithuanian

Catholic thinkers shifted their focus from their earlier commitment to the re-Christianization of modern culture towards reimagining Christianity and exploring its capacity to confront the most urgent challenges of modernity. Their reflections built upon the foundations laid by Šalkauskis and his colleagues since the early 1920s, but took a more pronounced utopian character in response to the intensified experience of rupture.

By the second half of the 1930s, Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania shifted their attention towards a threat posed by communism and, to a lesser extent, fascism to Christianity and the Lithuanian national project. As a response, they increasingly began questioning the linear direction of history and recognized the potential for multiple outcomes in the future development of the old continent. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War served as a catalyst, deepening the perception of a temporal discontinuity with the past among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers. They perceived liberal order as inherently flawed, which was only confirmed by the Great Depression of the 1930s and the simultaneous rise of aggressive anti-Christian movements, Bolshevism and Nazism. The intensified experience of crisis was coupled with the sense that the possibility of the breakdown of European civilization was becoming increasingly real, which led them to rethink their own religious commitments. As it is evident from Maceina's interventions, the Young Catholics began looking for ways how to renew Christianity so it could win the battle over the soul of modern man. At stake was both the future of European civilization and the Lithuanian national project.

The chapter zooms in on key events in the intellectual life of Lithuanian Catholics from 1936 to 1938: the congress organized by the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences in early 1936, which was dedicated to addressing the “spiritual” crisis, and

the annual meeting of the Centre of Catholic Action at the end of 1936, during which Maceina introduced a new program of moral and spiritual renewal, as well as the discussions that continued in the following years. By looking into these two events and focusing Šalkauskis and his closest collaborators, we gain insight into Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals' experiences of modernity, which differed drastically from the enthusiastic years of the 1920s. This chapter, therefore, explores the relationship between their perceptions of modernity, their religious commitments, and their views on the national project.

4. 1. The Crisis of European Modernity and Lithuanian Catholic Thought

By the mid-1930s, the language of crisis spread among Lithuanian intellectuals like wildfire, with the crisis of modern culture becoming one of the most pressing problems discussed in philosophical circles.¹ Šalkauskis, as early as 1933, observed the signs of the disintegration of European culture, asserting that “[e]verywhere one can feel certain manifestations of decadence, which warn critically thinking people of some decay, some fantastic evolution taking place in the depths of our civilization. The man born of this evolution resembles savage man, although considerably different from him and in a certain sense even more dangerous than him.”² Meanwhile, inspired by Max Scheler, Tamošaitis, the philosopher and influential ideologue of the Smetona regime whom we encountered in chapter 3, placed the cultural crisis at the center of his reflections. In a 1931 lecture to university students, Tamošaitis noted the widespread discussions on crisis in philosophical debates throughout Europe,

¹ The following examples are borrowed from Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 140-4.

² Stasys Šalkauskis, *Ateitininkų ideologija: Paskutinių laikų formavimosi vyksme* [The Ideology of Ateitis: In the development of recent times] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1933), 148.

remarking ironically that nowadays “even the sparrows on the rooftops are beginning to chirp” about the crisis of culture.³ The sense that European modernity was in crisis was widely acknowledged, as reflected in the writings of Vasily Sesemann (1884–1963), an émigré philosopher from Russia teaching at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Kaunas. Sesemann argued that “[w]e are actually living at the beginning of a new era in history,” asserting that “the cultural crisis is not a fantasy, but the most real fact that we are experiencing with all our [...] essence.”⁴ The experience of crisis extended beyond ideological boundaries, with both the right and the left engaging in reflections on the topic. It was for example addressed in the left-wing cultural journal *Kultūra* (*The Culture*).⁵ It is, therefore, important to note that the perception of crisis in modern European culture was not limited to Catholic thought but permeated broader circles of Lithuanian intellectuals.

In the mid-1930s, the experience of the crisis among Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals only intensified. A symbolic turning point was a 1936 congress organized by the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences. The congress was dedicated to examining the European spiritual crisis and its manifestations in Lithuanian life. The organizers sought to encourage Catholics to reflect on the ongoing crisis in European culture and to explore the principles that shaped the cultural life of Lithuania. The congress, which took place every three years, held great significance in the intellectual life of Lithuanian Catholics. It attracted the most prominent Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania, including figures like Šalkauskis and his collaborators, as well as other

³ Izidorius Tamošaitis, “Dabarties mokykla ir pedagogikos uždaviniai” [The contemporary school and the tasks of pedagogy], *Vairias*, 1931, No. 12, 430.

⁴ Vosylius Sezemanas [Vasily Sesemann], *Laikas, kultūra ir kūnas: Šių dienų kultūros uždaviniam pažinti* [Time, culture and body: Exploring the challenges of contemporary culture] (Kaunas: Spaudos Fondas, 1935), 3. As quoted by Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 140.

⁵ Andrius Bulota [B. Amalvis], “Jaunosios kartos krizė” [The crisis of the young generation], *Kultūra*, 1935, No. 3, 161-5; No. 4, 227-33; Andrius Bulota [B. Amalvis], “Kultūros sutemos ir pasaulėžiūros krizė” [The dusk of culture and the crisis of worldview], *Kultūra*, 1935, No. 6-7, 355-61; No. 8, 433-7.

professors from the University of Kaunas. Official statistics indicate that over 500 participants attended the two-day congress, with the majority being laypeople, and approximately one-third of them coming from outside Kaunas.⁶ All the most important ecclesiastical authorities in Lithuania were present, including the Archbishop Juozas Skvireckas, all the bishops, and the attaché and secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Lithuania, Antonio Samorè.⁷ They all gathered to engage in discussions about the crisis and prospects of European culture. The congress provided an opportunity for intellectuals connected to the philosophy of culture tradition to showcase its analytical capabilities in examining the causes of the crisis and proposing solutions. Notably, Kuraitis, the Head of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, emphasized the close connection between the topics discussed at the congress and the interests of the faculty members. In his address to the congress participants, he pointed out that “most of the issues raised at this congress are also close to the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. For this reason, the Faculty wishes that these issues will be useful and relevant and that the work of the Faculty will be enriched and extended.”⁸

Lithuanian intellectuals recognized that the situation in Europe was directly linked to the future of Lithuanian culture. An anonymous author in *Naujoji Romuva* highlighted this connection, stating that “[b]efore the [First World] war, living as if behind the scenes, we [the Lithuanians] have experienced the catastrophe of civilization less, but now, entering the public stage, we feel all the reverberations, and its destiny awaits us

⁶ Stasys Yla, “Antrasis L. K. mokslininkų ir mokslo mėgėjų suvažiavimas” [The second congress of Lithuanian Catholic scientists and science enthusiasts], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 457-72, here at: 457.

⁷ “Katalikų mokslininkų ir mokslo mėgėjų II suvažiavimas” [The second congress of Catholic scientists and science enthusiasts], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1936, No. 9, 213.

⁸ The quote was provided by Stasys Yla, “Antrasis L. K. mokslininkų ir mokslo mėgėjų suvažiavimas” [The second congress of Lithuanian Catholic scientists and science enthusiasts], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 457-72, here at: 460.

as well.”⁹ Similarly, the philosopher Dambrauskas, who served as the Head of the Catholic Academy of Sciences, explained in his opening speech that both European and Lithuanian situations had to be studied together:

In choosing this topic, we will not deal with it in the abstract, without connection with the life of our nation. On the contrary, we have, from the very beginning, adopted the attitude that a critical study of European culture should entail that form in which *the fabric of our spiritual development* can more easily be grasped. We hope that this general examination will encourage more than one Gentleman to study our nation’s history of ideas, to explore the life of our culture, [and] its ideological foundations, in particular those principles which determine the fate of the nation and the state.¹⁰

According to the organizers, all the visible manifestations of crisis had their roots in the deeper spiritual crisis, because modern European culture was built on erroneous foundations and needed a religious grounding. They believed and it was the task of Catholics to find a solution. Eretas, for instance, referred to the Swiss Catholic thinker Gonzague de Reynold, who suggested that the true nature of the crisis lay in the violation of eternal principles: “just as a house collapse when the architect breaks with the laws of construction, so the world collapses when it is not built according to eternal principles.”¹¹

Of the many contributions to the congress, the presentation of Šalkauskis is of particular interest. In his lecture “The Ideological Foundations of the Present Crises and the Catholic Worldview” Šalkauskis articulated the feelings and attitudes about the present moment of European cultural history shared by many Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals. While his views were not particularly original, he managed to explain

⁹ P., “Dvasios krizis per lietuvišką prizmę” [The crisis of spirit through the Lithuanian prism], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1936, No. 4, 93.

¹⁰ Adomas Jakštas [Aleksandras Dambrauskas], “Atidaromoji kalba” [The opening speech], as it was provided by Stasys Yla, “Antrasis L. K. mokslininkų ir mokslo mėgėjų suvažiavimas” [The second congress of Lithuanian Catholic scientists and science enthusiasts], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 457-72, here at: 458,

¹¹ Juozas Eretas, “Quid de nocte? Kelias ir etapai į šių dienų dvasios krizę” [Quid de nocte? The path and stages to the present-day spiritual crisis], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 3-44, here at: 42.

them in a comprehensive manner. In this lecture, Šalkauskis attacked the “anthropocentric turn” of European culture during the Renaissance, when the man turned away from God. This was, he suggested, nothing else than a metaphysical “error” that derailed European culture from its foundations: “It is enough to deny God and draw a coherent practical conclusion from it to create a whole series of catastrophic crises in life.”¹² Perceiving contemporary Europe being in the state of crisis, Šalkauskis saw Bolshevism, Fascism, and National Socialism as the most recent and most radical outcomes of the rejection of God that had its roots in the Renaissance. This perspective underscored the extent to which Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals perceived the European spiritual crisis intertwined with contemporary politics.

Reflecting on the spiritual crisis of the present day, Šalkauskis presented a genealogy of European modernity, which served to highlight the shortcomings of the present day. Šalkauskis traced the negative tendencies of modernity as a result of turning away from the “theocentric culture” of the Middle Ages to the anthropocentrism of the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, the center of social and cultural relations was God: “The Middle Ages constituted a theocentric world dominated by the spiritual-religious interests. Human life was then maintained in a decent hierarchy; material matters were subordinated to cultural, cultural to religious. The man had his proper place in the broad synthesis of the whole, with God as the center and the apex. The sense of unity, the genius of synthesis, and the tendency towards fullness characterized this theocentric-minded man.”¹³ However, Šalkauskis explained, the Renaissance saw a

¹² Stasys Šalkauskis, “Ideologiniai dabarties krizių pagrindai ir katalikų pasaulėžiūra” [The ideological foundations of contemporary crises and the Catholic worldview], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

cultural-spiritual revolution when man made himself into the center of life, turning away from God. From the Renaissance onwards, European culture became anthropocentric, depriving modern man of a spiritual center. Like many others, he suggested that modern life was built on erroneous foundations. Relapsed from Christianity, Šalkauskis asserted, the modern world was “drowning in intellectual and moral anarchy.”¹⁴

Šalkauskis, reflecting the views of many, emphasized that the crisis facing modern European civilization was fundamentally a spiritual crisis. Consequently, he believed that the solution to this crisis must also be spiritual in nature. According to Šalkauskis, the primary task of Catholicism was to initiate a certain moral and spiritual reform, resolving the “spiritual” crisis by a renewed recognition of God as the center of life. Considering Christianity to be the only “integral” worldview, he asserted that only Christianity could resolve the contradictions of modernity by bringing its positive elements into a coherent synthesis. He, therefore, criticized the tendency among Catholics “*to regard historical forms as the ultimate expressions of truth.*”¹⁵ Instead, he urged them to explore new ways of expressing Christian teachings, free from dogmatic attachment to any specific social or political configuration. Rather than attempting to restore the medieval order, Šalkauskis believed, modern Catholics should find new ways to reassert the relevance of their religion in public life. In particular, he emphasized the importance of renewing Catholic Action, which, he claimed, had the potential to counteract the negative tendencies of modernity: “This worldwide Catholic movement, which is perfectly in line with the dynamic spirit of

¹⁴ Ibid., 63.

¹⁵ Ibid., 73.

the times and directed against all the wounds of the modern world, could change the face of the world if Catholics truly devote themselves to it with the necessary zeal.”¹⁶

Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals were influenced by various European sources, which shaped their perception on the antagonism between Christianity and modern political ideologies. Many Catholic thinkers of the interwar period shared Šalkauskis’s view that contemporary crisis was a consequence of the “anthropocentric turn” during the Renaissance, which resulted in the loss of the harmonious relationship between religion and culture that had been achieved during the Middle Ages. By invoking the “anthropocentric turn,” these thinkers criticized the tendencies of secularization and its perceived by-products that they observed in contemporary society.¹⁷ In their diagnosis of spiritual crisis, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers were drawn to Jacques Maritain, whose *Integral Humanism* (1935), whose interpretation of personalism resonated with Šalkauskis’s ideas, making him a reference not only in Šalkauskis’s philosophy lectures but also in those of Maceina and Kuraitis.¹⁸ Additionally, the “non-conformist” Emmanuel Mounier, who edited the journal *Esprit*, was another underlying influence behind these Lithuanian intellectuals’ thinking. Šalkauskis, for example, subscribed to *Esprit*, and Maceina explicitly drew on Mounier in his writings on social justice. Gonzague de Reynold, who in the 1930s was the most influential thinker of the “national revolution” in Switzerland, was another author read by many.¹⁹ In 1938, his book *Tragic Europe* (1934) was published in Lithuanian,

¹⁶ Ibid., 79.

¹⁷ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 145; Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 78-92.

¹⁸ Juozas Girmius, “Jacques Maritainui mirus” [After the death of Jacques Maritain], *Aidai*, No. 9 (1973).

¹⁹ Aram Mattioli, “Denkstil ‘christliches Abendland:’ Eine Fallstudie zu Gonzague de Reynold,” *Der Wert ‘Europa’ und die Geschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Geschichtsbewusstsein*, vol. 2, ed. Kerstin Armbrorst and Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele (Mainz: Institut für Europäische Geschichte, 2007), 60-75.

translated by Šalkauskis's former student Bronius Stočkus.²⁰ Another reoccurring reference point was Nicolas Berdyaev, and his ideas strongly shaped Maceina's thinking, as we have previously discussed in chapter 2. Infused with fervent criticism of anthropocentric culture and rationalism, Berdyaev's philosophy that he laid out in the books *The Meaning of History* (1923) and *The New Middle Ages* (1924) had a lasting impact on interwar Lithuanian Catholicism.²¹ Despite their differences, all these thinkers shared a belief that man's life could not be complete without the recognition of the spiritual element. Berdyaev for instance asserted that in modern culture "[d]humanization has penetrated into all phases of human creativity. In making himself God, man has unmanned himself."²² Medieval Christian spiritual orientation towards God, therefore, must be restored, and the "anthropocentric humanism" of the Renaissance replaced with the "theocentric humanism" that would recognize the "person" as a center of all social interactions between men.²³ The distinction of the "theocentric humanism" and the "anthropocentric humanism" was implicit to Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals' thinking and it framed their discussion of the European spiritual crisis, the repercussions of which they identified in contemporary cultural, economic, and political life.

Interwar Lithuanian Catholic thinkers were characterized by their conviction that the present constituted a liminal phase between two periods of history. They invoked this image of liminality, claiming that they were standing at the end of an epoch in

²⁰ Gonzague de Reynold, *Tragiškoji Europa: Naujųjų laikų revoliucija* (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1938).

²¹ Jolita Mulevičiūtė, "The Programme of the Journal *Naujoji Romuva* and Its Impact upon Lithuanian Art," *Reinterpreting the Past: Traditionalist Artistic Trends in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1920s and 1930s*, ed. Irena Kossowska (Warsaw: Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2010), 231-44, here at: 234.

²² Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1935), 29.

²³ Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), chapt. 3; Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and "Revolution," 1891–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 10-1.

European cultural history, witnessing the birth of a new one. This was, they suggested, a downfall of the anthropocentric West. In 1926, the historian of art and painter Ignas Šlapelis (1881–1956), inspired by Berdyaev, wrote in the Catholic journal of philosophy *Logos*: “So today we [the contemporary Europeans] too are living through and coming to the end of one of the most unfortunate periods in history. We are now ending the Renaissance-humanist period and beginning a new one, whose name we do not yet know, whom we do not know at all, who stands before us in the form of a sphinx.”²⁴ Similarly, Kuraitis asserted in 1932 that “[t]he present time is a time of various crises, a time of re-evaluation of values, a time of sharp discontent with the present, a time of anxious looking towards a better future. We all feel that we are living a life of transitional times.”²⁵ In his 1936 lecture, Šalkauskis meanwhile suggested that “we are living on the threshold of two periods. The old world is passing away and a new world is being born, the characteristics of which will have to color and give a name to the new period.”²⁶ Elsewhere Maceina expressed this experience of rupture in an even clearer way: “To think that life will ever go back [as it was in the past] is the greatest illusion. We have already entered a completely different era.”²⁷ In other words, there could be no return to the times before the crisis; it could be overcome only through the reconfiguration of modernity. They maintained that the First World War brought a rupture in European cultural history, with the disintegration of the bourgeois liberal of the nineteenth-century order as well as moral

²⁴ Ignas Šlapelis, “Menas ir visuomenės idealai” [Art and the ideals of society], *Logos*, 1926, No. 2, 163-74, here at: 169.

²⁵ Pranas Kuraitis, “Įvedamasis žodis” [Introductory word] to Juozas Lomanas, *Quo vadis, modernioji Europa?* [Quo Vadis, Modern Europe?] (Kaunas, 1932), iv.

²⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Ideologiniai dabarties krizių pagrindai” [The ideological foundations of contemporary crises], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 64.

²⁷ Antanas Maceina, “Tragiškoji Europa (Gonzague de Reynold knygos lietuviško vertimo proga)” [review], *Tiesos kelias*, 1939, No. 7-8, 558-69, here at: 561.

and intellectual anarchy. This temporal caesura, they all believed, required a comprehensive restructuring of modern society.

One reoccurring theme of their writings was the image of the rationalized West, which was often portrayed as lacking the spiritual element. Keliuotis for example explained in 1935: “Modern Europe has not been able to realize a harmonious synthesis between its technical civilization and its spiritual culture, which is why its fate is tragic, it is in a deep crisis, and it is threatened by grave dangers.”²⁸ Similarly, in his 1936 book *Introduction to Philosophy of Culture* Maceina claimed that Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West* (1918) was the symbol of the exhaustion felt in the West, reading his prophecies about decline as the representations of the rationalized bourgeois consciousness that experienced its own demise. Spengler’s thinking, Maceina asserted,

is a characteristic of the West, and in a sense, he is even a symbol of all Western life. The mood that pervades his entire work is not only his personal mood but the mood of the whole of Western life, which is tired and exhausted in its rationality. Spengler is a cultural pessimist. And he cannot be otherwise, because he sees the end of a historical period which, having been cut off from the roots of life, has dried itself up and is now awaiting its end day after day. The West is overworked. They are tired. It is exhausted in its organization, logic, and technique. [...] All Western culture has been built on the surface of life. Organization, intelligence, and technology cannot reach the depths of life. Meanwhile, these three marks are precisely what characterize the whole of Western life with its culture and religion.²⁹

Maceina suggested that the signs of decadence were evident in modern philosophical thought, indicating that European culture needed a certain spiritual renewal. He longed for new kinds of meaning embedded in personal experience, which would defy the logic of modern rationalism. However, neither he nor other Lithuanian Catholic

²⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, “Civilizacijos problema” [The problem of civilization], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 12-13, 269-276, here at: 276.

²⁹ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [Introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 42.

intellectuals took seriously the idea that the decline of the West was inevitable, strongly believing in the regenerative power of Christian spirituality.

One great difference that distinguished these Lithuanian Catholics from their counterparts in Western Europe was their clearly articulated orientation towards the future. Despite criticizing the perceived consequences of the “anthropocentric turn” in European cultural history, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals maintained a belief in the inherent value of modernization and Westernization. They did not suggest that the development of a profoundly original national culture required rejecting Western European models in the name of local traditions, avoiding making sharp distinctions based on the opposition between organic national *Kultur* and mechanistic Western *Zivilisation*.³⁰ Nor did they see in the past a model order or certain golden age that had to be restored in the present. Šalkauskis, for example, in his 1926 book *An Outline of Philosophy of Culture (Kultūros filosofijos metmens)* asserted that the crisis of contemporary European culture presented an opportunity for Lithuania:

Lithuania is in the vortex of cultural and social movements, situated between Western Europe and Eurasia, as Russia is sometimes called by some people. *The cultural problem is of particular relevance to Lithuania* because the Lithuanian nation is still at the beginning of its national, political, and, in general, spiritual [and] cultural rebirth, so to speak. The solution to the cultural problem, one way or the other, once it has taken root in our society, will turn the whole of its activity to its own side. It is therefore important for us to guard against one-sided solutions to the cultural problem, which are mostly the result of unconscious reactions against temporary setbacks. [...] *Only a broad, synthetic, or integral, solution to the cultural problem and a proper attitude toward cultural creation can guarantee the development and cultural prosperity destined for our nation.*³¹

While reading Spengler, they rejected the German thinker’s predictions about the inevitable decline of European civilization, seeing the present moment as an

³⁰ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), esp. chapt 1.

³¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Kultūros filosofijos metmens: Sutrauktasis paskaitų kursas, leidžiamas rankraščio teisėmis* [An outline of philosophy of culture: A collected course of lectures, published under manuscript rights] (Kaunas: 1926), 6.

opportunity for eliminating the gap between Lithuania and the West. In other words, they were committed to the idea of Lithuania catching up with Europe's most advanced nations.

Lithuanian Catholic thinkers strove to find ways of bringing the spiritual renewal, because for the national and Christian dimensions were interlinked in a particular way. Lithuanian Catholic thinkers reconciled the apparent contradiction between their perception that European modernity was in crisis and their continuous pursuit of modernization by associating cultural advancement with Western Christianity. In their minds European civilizational achievements were tied to Christianity, them repeatedly claiming that it had an especially positive effect on the development of national culture. Even more, they saw this connection as evident in Lithuanian cultural history. None other than the historian Ivinskis linked the cultural advancement of medieval Lithuania with the influences of the Christian West. Since the mid-1930s, Ivinskis urged his fellow historians to adopt a comparative perspective in the study of medieval Lithuania, especially emphasizing the cultural transfers that came together with social, political, and economic interactions between European states.³² This methodological choice served for political reasons, allowing Ivinskis to stress the importance of Christianity in Lithuanian history. Echoing Šalkauskis's ideas that were formulated already in his 1919 book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds*, Ivinskis claimed that the "problem of the East and the West" was the "main problem of the

³² In 1929-1932, Ivinskis studied history at Munich and Berlin. In 1932, under the supervision of the medievalist Albert Brackmann, Ivinskis defended his doctoral thesis on *Geschichte des Bauerstandes in Litauen* (published as a book in 1933) at the University of Berlin. Since 1933, he taught at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy in Kaunas, where he soon became a *Dozent* and was appointed a chair in universal history. For Ivinskis's innovations in studying history, see Rimvydas Petrauskas, "Zenonas Ivinskis ir Henrykas Łowmiański: pokyčiai tarpukario medievistikoje Kaune ir Vilniuje" [Zenonas Ivinskis and Henryk Łowmiański: Developments in interwar medieval studies in Kaunas and Vilnius] *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir tautiniai naratyvai*, ed. Alfredas Bumblauskas and Grigorijus Potašenko (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2009), 225-35.

Lithuanian history.”³³ Writing in 1935, the young historian however like many other Catholic thinkers believed that the country’s main aim was to Westernize, in his essays praising the pagan rulers of medieval Lithuania for their pursuit of Christianization from Poland. For him, it was clear that in the medieval period the adoption of Western Christianity was synonymous with cultural advancement: “The attributes of Western culture of that time, education, schools, writing, the higher forms of material and especially spiritual life, were inseparably linked to the Church.”³⁴ The Christianization of Lithuania, Ivinskis asserted, was a civilizational choice, a necessary but belated step that uplifted Lithuanian culture and integrated the country into the Christian West.

In their historical explorations, Šalkauskis and his collaborators provided a vision of Lithuanian history, in which Christianity was beneficial for the advancement of national culture, simultaneously stressing that the present unsatisfactory state of Lithuanian culture was a consequence of belated Christianization. This was particularly evident in 1937, when Lithuania celebrated the five hundred- and fifty-years anniversary of its baptism. Šalkauskis for instance asserted: “Nations that have delayed their conversion to Christianity have lost a lot of precious time in their cultural development and have even weakened nationally. This is precisely the loss of the Lithuanian nation, which joined the Christian community much later than its neighbor.”³⁵ Similar ideas were circulating among Catholic historians. The historian Simas Sužiedėlis (1903–1985) suggested that “[f]or Lithuania, baptism was inevitable because of the difficult political and cultural situation of Lithuania, created by the

³³ Zenonas Ivinskis, “Lietuvos istorijos problemos” [The problems of Lithuanian history], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 12-3, 288-91.

³⁴ Zenonas Ivinskis, “Senovės lietuvių kultūros problemos” [The problems of ancient Lithuanian culture], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 4-5, 93-9, here at: 98.

³⁵ This and the following quotes are taken from Stasys Yla, *Krikščionybės įvedimas Lietuvoje* [The introduction of Christianity in Lithuania] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1938), 53. The author did to provide references to original publications.

isolation of Lithuanian life from Western Europe and the Christian world.”³⁶ In much the same way, Ivinskis claimed that “[i]n the extraordinary delay [in the acceptance] of Christianity, the Lithuanian nation is suffering the painful consequences of its historical fate.”³⁷ The historian and priest Juozapas Stakauskas (1900–1972) meanwhile claimed that Catholicism brought Western culture into Lithuania and laid the foundation for the national culture: “The Catholic Church has diligently nurtured and promoted the sciences throughout the ages. Under her leadership, Western life has produced achievements of eternal value in theology, philosophy, and law. That is why, when she came to Lithuania, she was the first to establish schools, to educate the intelligentsia, and to train the first scholars in the universities of Western Europe. Further intellectual [and] spiritual life was under her direct influence.”³⁸ Before the baptism, he stressed, Lithuanians lacked cultural achievements. In their writings on Lithuanian history, these thinkers all asserted that Christianization enabled Lithuania to uplift its cultural level and establish it as part of European civilization. In other words, expressing a much larger tendency in Lithuanian Catholicism, these Catholic intellectuals believed that Christianity was a key factor not only for Lithuania’s cultural advancement in the past but also in the present moment.

For Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, the question of the “spiritual” crisis was linked with the question of national advancement. Thus, the prevalence of the crisis discourses led them to think of new projects that could revive religious life. They all suggested that to “solve” the crisis, culture had to receive religious grounding. Catholics had to reclaim the modern world, acknowledging its cultural advances, but shifting its overall orientation. The secular conceptions of man had to be countered by the Christian one,

³⁶ Ibid., 9.

³⁷ Ibid., 53.

³⁸ Juozapas Stakauskas, “Katalikybė ir lietuvių tauta” [Catholicism and Lithuanian nation], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938 No. 5, 265–72, here at: 268.

with God becoming once again the center of man's life. Only the theocentric turn of culture could save European civilization from downfall.

4. 2. The Communist Threat

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 only confirmed the perceptions of Lithuanian Catholic thinkers about the “spiritual” crisis. By 1936, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers became increasingly consumed with a fear of communism. Just a few years ago, in 1933, Keliuotis was able to argue, from the perspective of 1936 rather shortsightedly, that Marxism as both an intellectual and revolutionary movement will soon disappear. Marxism was the product of its times, he claimed, and in the twentieth century it was already outdated: half a century after Karl Marx's death, the philosophical foundations of Marxism were refuted by contemporary philosophical advances, while class antagonisms were being resolved by well-ordered corporatism.³⁹ By the second half of 1936, the situation looked completely different; Catholic thinkers were convinced of the presence of the international danger of communism. In a 1936 article on a new constitution of the Soviet Union, Dielininkaitis observed that “a few years ago it seemed that the expansion of communism seemed to have stopped. But nowadays it has come out on the offensive internationally again.”⁴⁰ It was necessary, he suggested, for Catholics to prepare for the new battle against the communist ideas: “it is time for the ideological, social and political forces that are

³⁹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Marksizmo likvidacija: Markso 50 m. mirties sukakčiai paminėti” [The liquidation of Marxism: Commemorating the 50th anniversary of Marx's death], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1933, No. 116, 265-7.

⁴⁰ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Staliniškąją konstituciją paėmus” [Looking at the Stalinist constitution], *XX amžius*, December 12, 1936, 4.

fighting against it to review how they worked so far and to update and improve their methods of work.”⁴¹

By the mid-1930s, many Catholics feared the emergence of communism as a major political force in Europe. At that time, the rise of the Popular Front strategy, inaugurated by the Comintern in 1935, transformed communist parties from small fringe movements into a serious threat to capitalist order and political systems in Europe. When the *Front Populaire* won a general election in the spring of 1936, seizing 61 percent of seats in the French Chamber of Deputies, the French Communist Party became the junior partner in the new government. For Catholics all over Europe, this was a sign that the threat of a communist takeover was imminent. Speaking shortly after the French elections, Pope Pius XI asserted that communism was “a common danger, threatening everything and everyone, including the sacred space of the family and the state and society.”⁴² Even bigger warning that further increased Catholics’ fears about the communist threat was the civil war that emerged in Spain, where the leadership of the local Popular Front was inspired by the success of the French counterparts. These events had repercussions far beyond the borders of France and Spain, making a great impact on European political life and Catholicism, not excluding Lithuania. By looking at Spain, many interpreted it as a sign of what to expect from communism in other places. Unsurprisingly, all over Europe, the Spanish Civil War was often depicted by Catholics as a crusade for the future of Catholicism.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² As quoted in Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican’s Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 176.

⁴³ For the understanding of Catholic intellectuals’ reactions to the Spanish Civil War see Bernard E. Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame, IND and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 85-125; Jay Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democracy* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), chapt. 13. For the reactions of the Vatican to the rise of communism see Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican’s Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 168-

Many Catholics believed that the spread of communism was promoted and organized in a centralized way from Moscow through the Third International. In July 1936, a contributor to *XX Amžius*, who was traveling in France at the time, described the wave of workers' strikes in the country as part of Bolshevik efforts to ignite a global revolution. He cautioned that whenever disorder arose, whether in social or political spheres, Moscow's agents would swiftly intervene, sparing no effort or expense in attempting to foment revolution and steer it towards Bolshevism.⁴⁴ During the Spanish Civil War, *XX Amžius* provided constant coverage of the latest developments on the front. Under the pseudonym Hispanus, Eretas published a series of articles titled "Strategy at Madrid," portraying the Spanish Civil War as a struggle of Catholic Spain for the future of the Christian West. Eretas pointed out the internationalist and Jewish origins of the communist leadership in Spain, emphasizing that it was a coup orchestrated by the Communist International in Moscow, which had assembled an army to fuel global insurrections and pave the way for communist revolutions. According to Eretas:

That army is unparalleled in the history of warfare. [...] It was formed by the Comintern. As a morganatic [*morganiška*] organization of Soviet Russia to bring about a world revolution, it has organized strikes, insurrections, [and] soviets, from its very birth, especially taking advantage of the post-war upheaval (1918-1920) and, later, after the economic crisis (1928), to exhaust the bourgeois world and prepare it for the final offensive that would win Europe for communism.⁴⁵

Eretas's articles on the military actions in Spain served as a clear warning to Lithuanian Catholics, urging them to prevent similar upheavals from taking place in Lithuania. Likewise, in early 1937, Grinius, also a member of the Young Catholics,

83. On communist tactics of the Popular Front and their involvement in the Spanish Civil War see Jonathan Haslam, *The Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 178-244.

⁴⁴ Meškus, "Nervingasis Prancūzų gyvenimas keleivio akyse" [The nervous life of the French as seen through the eyes of a passenger], *XX amžius*, July 6, 1936, 3.

⁴⁵ Hispanus [Juozas Eretas], "Strategija ties Madridu (2): Kominternas vaduoja Madridą" [Strategy at Madrid (2): The Comintern liberates Madrid], *XX amžius*, December 9, 1936, 4.

highlighted the geopolitical aims of Soviet Russia when describing the current state of European politics:

*Numerous bloody and bloodless demonstrations, numerous strikes, the demands and meaning of which were not easy to understand, arose and arise from the fact that one head of the hydra of the International was ordered to start moving because Moscow wanted to achieve one or another political goal or to punish the ‘disobedient’ state. If the peoples of Europe dealt only with communist Russia, the danger to peace would be much lower; but when one is constantly confronted with the impalpable and irresponsible International, which wants to pursue its pseudo-religious mission with blood and fire, political life becomes much more complicated.*⁴⁶

In other words, the communist revolution was perceived as an ever-present possibility.

Communism was imagined by Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals as a conspiratorial force constantly prepared for subversion.

To gain insight into the prevailing atmosphere, one can turn to Dambrauskas, who had become a beacon of conservatism among Lithuanian Catholics by the 1930s. In his 1935 book *The Problem of Evil (Pikto problema)*, presented as a dialogue between individuals with diverse religious beliefs, Dambrauskas identified communism as one of the greatest problems plaguing humanity, stressing especially its atheistic character. Speaking through one of the characters, he asserted, “Bolshevism is the most poisonous gas, fabricated by Marx: it flows through the whole world, and wherever it concentrates, it destroys all life and kills every healthy thought. That infernal gas is most concentrated today in Moscow. That is why Moscow is the *greatest forge of evil*, where chains are constantly being forged to shackle the whole of humanity and, after drawing it away from Christ, to bring it to its knees before the Antichrist.”⁴⁷ According to Dambrauskas, the Soviet Union represented a paradoxical blend of backwardness and modernizing tendencies, evident in initiatives like the construction

⁴⁶ J. Gintautas [Jonas Grinius] “Ideologijų reikšmė tarptautiniuose santykiuose” [The significance of ideologies in the international relationships], *XX amžius*, February 12, 1937, 3.

⁴⁷ Aleksandras Dambrauskas [Adomas Jakštas], *Pikto problema* [The problem of evil] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1935), 77.

of new housing and electrification. The fruits of modernization, he claimed, were directed towards the further export of communism to other parts of the world. His depiction of communism bore similarities to the narratives published in *XX Amžius*. Observing the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and 1937, the young Lithuanian Catholics saw it much in the same way that Dambrauskas portrayed communism in his 1935 book.

The image of Moscow as the center of revolutionary activities was the reason why the fears of communism among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers were exacerbated even though the Lithuanian Communist Party remained a marginal force with no capacity for subverting political order. Although communism had achieved success in Western Europe, the Lithuanian Communist Party had little space for action: it operated illegally, its leadership was divided, the membership was scarce, and its activities were monitored by the state security services.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the fear of a communist revolution and the deeply rooted atheism within communist ideology became major preoccupations for Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania. Stressing the workings of Moscow, they repeatedly voiced their fears about the global rise of communism and its potential danger to Lithuania.

Interestingly, even if Maritain served as one of the inspirations for Lithuanian Catholic thinkers such as Šalkauskis, in their interpretation of the Spanish Civil War they chose to follow a different line than the French thinker, who argued against the simplistic distinction between Franco's Christian crusaders and atheist communism. Rejecting such an interpretation, Maritain drew attention to the presence of the Basque Catholics on the side of the Republicans, which was proof to him that the Spanish

⁴⁸ Marius Ėmužis, "Nesutarimai ir kovos dėl lyderystės tarp Lietuvos komunistų 1935-1937 m." [Disagreements and struggles for leadership among Lithuanian communists, 1935-1937], *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis* 1 (2019): 101-25.

Civil War was not a holy war. Differently from than majority of French Catholics, Maritain refused to support either side, for this putting forward theological arguments that the ends cannot justify the means.⁴⁹ Lithuanian Catholics were not susceptible to this line of reasoning, and such arguments were met with deaf ears, without addressing the fact that on the side of the Catholic Franco were Hitler and Mussolini. In their interpretation of the Spanish Civil War, Lithuanian Catholics were much closer to the conservative nationalists of *Action Française* than to Maritain, which can be explained by their still vivid memories of the Red Army in Lithuania in 1919.

The warnings about the dangers of communism resonated with the previous experience of the Lithuanian population, creating a strong anti-communist sentiment. Many of them, especially those of the older generation, still remembered the communist army after the First World War, when at the beginning of 1919 the Red Army led by the Lithuanian communist Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas occupied Vilnius, then the capital of Lithuania, seeking to establish the Bolshevik regime in Lithuania in an attempt to annex Lithuania to the newly established Soviet Russia.⁵⁰ One Lithuanian intellectual, writing in late 1936, recalled his experiences during that period: “The author of these lines, as today, remembers one such meeting held by the communist elements, where, among others, a student of those times spoke against the establishment of the army with the following derisive arguments: ‘Men, whoever is on a goat, whoever is on a stick – stand up to defend the independence of the bourgeois bellies! But, men, it is too late! Remember that the Russian proletariat has enough bayonets and gunpowder to cut the guts out of all the bourgeois brats. It has already taken root in Bavaria, in Hungary; it must take root day by day in Berlin and

⁴⁹ Bernard E. Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame, IND and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 85-125.

⁵⁰ On the Bolshevik rule of Vilnius see Tomas Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) chapt. 4.

elsewhere. The efforts of the Lithuanian bozos are therefore in vain. No volunteers will save anything here.”⁵¹ This and other similar reminiscences were only to further mobilize the Catholic elites against communism.

Reacting to the rise of communism in Europe, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals saw it as an existential threat to Christianity. The philosopher Sesemann, who did not belong to Catholic circles but managed to capture the prevailing sentiment, in his article “Christianity and Socialism,” which was published in the summer of 1936, asserted that “we are faced with the alternative: either to become aware of the existing principles of Christianity and to struggle for their fulfillment in culture or to recognize that Christianity has definitively gone bankrupt and has abandoned its highest and most important principles and demands.”⁵² He called for a certain kind of Christian solidarism that would follow Catholic social teachings: “Christianity will have to renounce the privileges it has enjoyed so far (the support from the capitalist circles and the state), but in the present situation there is no other way out: it has to either fight back or abandon the implementation of the principles of Christian Science altogether.”⁵³ In 1937, in the event organized to commemorate the anniversary of the 1897 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII, the Catholic economist Fabijonas Kemėsis (1880–1954) spoke of the fact that in the present crisis workers had two alternatives – communism and Christian solidarism. Reflecting on the further development of social and economic relations, he asserted that in the future “humanity, and in particular the working society, will be divided into two great groups, one of which will want to follow the path of class struggle and social

⁵¹ Valentinas Gustainis, “Frontu prieš komunizmą” [Front against communism], *Vairas*, 1936, No. 12, 374.

⁵² Vosylius Sezemanas [Vasily Sesemann], “Krikščionybė ir socializmas” [Christianity and socialism] in Vosylius Sezemanas, *Raštai: Filosofijos istorija, kultūra* [Writings: The history of philosophy, culture], ed. Loreta Anulionytė (Vilnius: Mintis, 1997), 646.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 656.

revolutions, while the other will finally choose the path of social justice and social charity.”⁵⁴ The pronouncements like these stressed that communism and Christianity were antithetical to one another and could not be made compatible. This refrain of the binary of communist atheism *versus* Christianity evident in the writings of Lithuanian Catholics was an outcome of an international campaign launched by the Vatican to mobilize Catholic civil society organizations against the Communist International. The Vatican declared the Soviet Union to be inherently atheistic and portrayed it as the world’s worst evil.⁵⁵ The prevailing sentiment among Lithuanian Catholic thinkers was that of continuously pronounced confidence in the superiority of Christianity over secular ideologies.

During the Spanish Civil War, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals directed their attention towards the Soviet Union. The rapid and extensive modernization efforts of the Bolsheviks left a profound impression on them, as they viewed it as an entirely unprecedented phenomenon in history. Dielininkaitis stated that the establishment of the Soviet Union “both in its spirit, in its forms, and in its proportions, is a political, social, and moral attempt of a scale never before seen in human history.”⁵⁶ For him, this was a sign that Catholics needed to act. In contrast, Pakštas had a firsthand experience of the Soviet Union. In 1933, he embarked on a journey to various major cities in its western part, including Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv, and Minsk. However, his observations during the trip led him to form a negative impression of Bolshevism.

⁵⁴ Fabijonas Kemėšis, “Didžiųjų Popiežių enciklikos ir mūsų kelias” [Encyclicals of the great popes and our path], *Darbininkas*, May 22, 1937, 2-3.

⁵⁵ Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican’s Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), esp. 121-66. Contrary to the perception of the Vatican, in the 1920s and 1930s the Soviet Union did not have a clear policy on religion, engaging with it primarily as a political problem. According to Victoria Smolkin, “religion was taken seriously above all when it posed a threat to Bolshevik power,” see Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 21-56.

⁵⁶ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Staliniškąją konstituciją paėmus” [Looking at the Stalinist constitution], *XX amžius*, December 12, 1936, 3-4.

Usually, Pakštas would publish his travel impressions in the press, but this time it was different. After coming back, Pakštas had ridiculed life in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Embassy in Kaunas made sure that his critical observations would not reach the press.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Pakštas preserved his recollections of the journey, which included a noteworthy encounter. He recounted a conversation with a Russian scientist who remarked, ““You, in Europe, should be grateful for the experiment we are doing. Maybe [after learning the results that it produced] you will not see a reason to do it [in your own countries].””⁵⁸ The magnitude of the Bolshevik modernization efforts, combined with Pakštas’s negative experience in the Soviet Union, likely only reinforced their determination to address the challenges presented by communism.

One of the most insightful analysts of communism among Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals was the priest Stasys Yla (1908–1983), who had been a student of Šalkauskis and an active member of the Young Catholics’ circle. Yla pursued his studies at both the Kaunas theological seminary and the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, specializing in pedagogy and psychology. Later, he embarked on advanced studies in Belgium and France, where he familiarized himself with new methods of pastoral care. Upon his return in 1935, Yla took on teaching positions at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and the Kaunas theological seminary, giving lectures on pastoral theology to aspiring priests.⁵⁹ In addition to his academic endeavors, Yla was the editor of the religious section of the weekly *Mūsų Laikraštis*, the official publication of Catholic Action in Lithuania. Furthermore, Yla joined the

⁵⁷ Juozas Eretas, *Kazys Pakštas: tautinio šauklio odisėja (1893-1960)* [Kazys Pakštas: The odyssey of a national herald, 1893-1960] (Vilnius: Pasviręs pasaulis, 2002), 56.

⁵⁸ Kazys Pakštas, *Trys savaitės Sovietuose (Naujos civilizacijos dirbtuvėje)* [Three weeks visiting the Soviets (in the workshop of new civilisation)] [unpublished manuscript] as quoted in *ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁹ Yla’s biography is yet to be written. For the main facts of Yla’s biography see the reminiscences of his acquaintances that are published together in Yla’s selected writings: Stasys Yla, *Tolyn į laiką, gilyn į gelmę: Kun. Stasys Yla raštuose ir atsiminimuose* [Further back in time, deeper into the depths: Fr. Stasys Yla in his writings and memoirs], ed. Gediminas Mikėlaitis (Vilnius: Aidai, 1997), 295-330.

editorial board of *XX Amžius*, a newspaper established by the Young Catholics. During the mid-1930s, he authored a series of essays on communism, making him the most remarkable analyst of this ideology among Lithuanian intellectuals. What set Yla's analysis apart was its empirical nature. He extensively drew on the Lithuanian Communist Party's publications, including party programs and pamphlets, all of which were published illegally by communist outlets. Yla's first-hand knowledge gained through the study of communist literature, even engaging with the works of prominent Lithuanian communist intellectuals, allowed him to offer a perspective that transcended the typical Catholic rejection of communism based solely on its incompatibility with Christianity. He went a step further, emphasizing that communism posed a threat not only to religious beliefs but also to the Lithuanian national project.

Writing under the pseudonym Juozas Daulius, Yla became particularly productive analyst of communism after the eruption of the Spanish Civil War. In his essays from 1936, he drew attention to heightened danger of communism on the global scene: “[t]he civil war in Spain, the strikes of a political nature against the cautious policy of the government in France in the wake of the events in Spain, the attempts to prepare coups in Austria, Portugal and in South America (Argentina and Brazil) – all these are, as it were, a signal alerting the peoples of the increased danger of communism.”⁶⁰ Soon, Yla shifted his focus to communist groups in Lithuania. In 1937, he produced a comprehensive study entitled *Communism in Lithuania (Komunizmas Lietuvoje)*, in which he analyzed the tactics, organizational structures, and plans of communists within Lithuania. His research led him to suggest that communists aimed to undermine Lithuanian statehood. The Baltic States, according to Yla, played a

⁶⁰ Juozas Daulius [Stasys Yla], “Antikomunistiniai frontai: Jų jėga ir silpnybė” [Anti-communist fronts: Their strength and weakness], *XX amžius*, October 21, 1936, 3.

particularly important role in communist plans: “The Baltic, as has already been noted, is one of the most important links in the chain of communist positions. What France plays for the isolation of Germany from the west, the communists believe the Baltic should play for the isolation of Germany from the east.”⁶¹ He suggested that Lithuania’s geopolitical location, with borders on both Poland and Germany, made it the most important among the Baltic States.

Yla argued that communists, guided by Moscow through the Communist International, posed a universal threat. The priest warned of communists’ exploitation of friction and social conflicts to subvert existing orders, showcasing their flexibility in employing localized strategies. While class antagonisms were communists’ focus in the United States and Europe, they supported anti-colonial movements seeking national independence in Africa and Asia. In Lithuania, they not only fostered chaos by exploiting social inequality but also utilized destructive tactics by aligning with dissatisfied elements of the German-speaking population in the Klaipėda region.⁶² Besides being antithetical to Christianity, communism threatened to destroy the autonomy of every group, community, institution, and nation: “Just as it would be naïve to think that communism threatens only Spain and France politically, so it would be equally naïve to think that communism ideologically threatens, for example, only religion and its supporters, the Church, or the supposedly bourgeois culture of the West and its supporting circles. No. Communism does not threaten any one value and its supporters, but all values [...], and all their supporters [...], and all regimes [...]”⁶³ The priest cautioned that a successful Bolshevik revolution in Lithuania would likely result in the country’s occupation by Soviet Russia, lamenting that “communism, as

⁶¹ Juozas Daulius [Stasys Yla], *Komunizmas Lietuvoje* [Communism in Lithuania] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1937), 8-9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11-45.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 179-80.

the enemy of our nation, our national culture, our national interests, is not yet understood by our society.”⁶⁴

Similar to other Catholic intellectuals, Yla firmly believed that Christianity provided the most effective counterforce against communism, and that national self-consciousness alone was insufficient to prevent the growth of communist supporters. Yla defined communism as the antithesis of Christianity, identifying its key characteristics as rationalistic materialism; anti-personalism; the primacy of economic issues; earthly messianism; the denial of national communities; statist totalism; the deification of technology; and the brutal use of force.⁶⁵ To combat the rise of communist revolution, Yla emphasized the need to strengthen the position of Christianity. He argued that the extent of the communist threat largely depended on the state of religion within the country:

The Christian worldview is undoubtedly the strongest ideological factor in the struggle against materialist communism. A strong Christian worldview in our nation is also necessary because national and political [*valstybinis*] consciousness [*susipratimas*] alone does not guarantee complete immunity from the invasion of communism. In place of the weakened Christian worldview, a materialist worldview will necessarily have to take hold, whose relation to communism is clear from the remarks already made.⁶⁶

Yla advocated for an active civil society that could resist the allure of communist ideas. Analyzing the subversive tactics of communist splinter groups and their posed danger to the independence of Lithuania, Yla suggested that communists aimed to infiltrate every social organization, seeking to subordinate them to their objectives. One of his main conclusions was the need to eliminate the conditions that facilitated the spread of communism, therefore, to fight “against those social, economic, national, political, ideological and professional evils which form the basis for communism to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 198.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 173-9.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 236-7.

spread in our nation.”⁶⁷ Moreover, communist ideas had to be confronted directly, aiming to reclaim those sections of society already enticed by communism and those more susceptible to its appeal: “the most important thing is to show the illogic of its ideas, the unreality of its promises, and the duplicity of its slogans.”⁶⁸

Yla particularly emphasized the importance of strengthening the positions of the Christian worldview in society, which had to be imbedded in families, schools, public institutions, and even in the state, because, he believed, secularization weakened society’s resistance to communism. When writing, Yla recognized the existence of the intellectual tradition of Christian anti-communism, recommending translating into Lithuanian works such as Nicolas Berdyaev’s *Problème du Communisme* (1935) and Waldemar Gurian’s *Der Bolschewismus, Einführung in Geschichte und Lehre* (1931) and *Bolschewismus als Weltgefahr* (1935). Yla’s primary objective was to engage with the Catholic audience. Prior to completing his book, he published excerpts in *Tiesos Kelias*, the official monthly of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, and they were subsequently reprinted in the Catholic newspaper for workers, *Darbininkas*.⁶⁹ The timing of the book’s publication was particularly opportune, as it appeared shortly after the announcement of *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) encyclical by Pius XI, which condemned the “monstrous emanations of the communistic system.”⁷⁰ In his efforts to combat secularization, Yla wrote a book in 1936 entitled *Freethinking in Lithuania* (*Laisvamanybė Lietuvoje*), arguing that freethinkers’ fight against religion paved the way for the communist revolution in Lithuania, because it most likely to occur when

⁶⁷ Ibid., 250.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 244.

⁶⁹ For the circumstances of the book’s publication see introduction and commentary by Nerijus Šepetys that accompanies the new edition of Yla’s book: Nerijus Šepetys, “Įvadas į lietuviškąją komunizmo kritiką” [Introduction into Lithuanian critique of communism], in Stasys Yla, *Komunizmas Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2012), ix-xxviii.

⁷⁰ Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris* [Encyclical Letter on Atheistic Communism], sec. 77, accessed on April 20, 2022. http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html.

religion is eradicated from the national consciousness.⁷¹ Yla concluded that an increase in secularization would render society more susceptible to materialism and, subsequently, to communism. These ideas aligned with the views of other Young Catholics who advocated for a certain transformation of the social order based on Christian teachings.

4. 3. Christianity and Prometheanism

While the rise of communism was a primary concern for many Catholics, Maceina's philosophical writings offered a broader perspective that encompassed both Bolshevism and Nazism as functionally similar phenomena. To understand Maceina's perception of these movements, it is necessary to examine his lectures from the spring of 1937, entitled "The Bourgeoisie, Prometheanism, and Christianity," which were part of his course on the philosophy of culture. In these lectures, the young Lithuanian *Kulturphilosoph* gave his view on European cultural history, interpreting the present moment as a liminal period in which the future order of Europe was being decided. The original manuscript of these lectures is now lost, but Maceina published parts of it in the press in 1937. We know this because some of these texts were later recycled in his 1940 book *The Downfall of the Bourgeoisie*, which, as he explained himself, was based on the material from these lectures of 1937.⁷² These materials, until now overlooked by historians, provide valuable insights into Maceina's views on the political and cultural situation in Europe. I argue that his philosophical reflections on the "ontological foundations" of Prometheanism, developed in 1937 and 1938, held

⁷¹ Juozas Daulius [Stasys Yla], *Laisvamanybė Lietuvoje: Kas ji ir ko ji nori?* [Freethinking in Lithuania: What is it and what it seeks?] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1936), 25.

⁷² Antanas Maceina, *Buržuazijos žlugimas* [The downfall of the bourgeoisie] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1940), 6.

significant political implications and could be read as a Catholic version of the theory of totalitarianism, even if he did not use this term.⁷³ Instead, Maceina employed the concept of Prometheanism, which he used to highlight the spiritual dimension of these political movements. An important difference between Maceina's thinking and the later theories of totalitarianism from the Cold War was that Prometheanism, as a comparative framework that encapsulated both Bolshevism and Nazism, was not devised to defend liberalism, but rather served as a part of his larger project to inspire Christian renewal.⁷⁴

Maceina's lecture on contemporary pedagogy, presented at the 1936 congress on the "spiritual crisis," sheds light on the development of his theory of Prometheanism. He drew inspiration from the work of the German psychologist Eduard Spranger, who emphasized that the inner life of man was interwoven with the configurations of the external world. In his 1921 book *Lebensformen*, Spranger presented a typology of six psychic structures that through their distinct styles of behavior shaped society: theoretical, economic, social, aesthetic, coercive, and religious.⁷⁵ Drawing on Spranger's theory, Maceina made his own typology, concluding that there were only three main moral-psychological types: naturalist, humanist, and theist.⁷⁶ Later, when elaborating on this theory in 1937 and 1938, Maceina renamed these types into three

⁷³ For similar projects in interwar Germany and France see James Chappel, "The Catholic Origins of Totalitarian Theory in Interwar Europe," *Modern Intellectual History* 8 (3) (2011): 561-90; Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 120-68.

⁷⁴ This interpretation differs greatly from the one provided by Leonidas Donskis, which remains the dominant one in the scholarship on Lithuanian Catholicism. Donskis suggested that Maceina "simultaneously leaned toward Bolshevism and National Socialism, which both, in his terms, embodied the spirit of Prometheanism that was incompatible with that of the bourgeoisie," see Leonidas Donskis, *Troubled Identity and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 116.

⁷⁵ Eduard Spranger, *The Types of Men: The Psychology and Ethics of Personality* (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966).

⁷⁶ Antanas Maceina, "Ideologiniai šių dienų pedagogikos pagrindai" [The ideological foundations of contemporary pedagogy], *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 2 (1936), ed. Juozas Eretas and Antanas Salys (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1937), 159-94, here at: 167.

spirits, respectively the Bourgeois, the Promethean, and the Christian, suggesting that they were present within every man. Unlike Spranger, the young Lithuanian philosopher was less interested in the philosophical reflection on psychological processes and instead used this tripartite typology as meta-historical categories that unlocked the deeper meaning of European cultural history. In adopting this approach, Maceina echoed the ideas of Berdyaev, suggesting that “[m]an’s external life is only a manifestation of his inner disposition. The external history of man is the projection of his internal history in time and space.”⁷⁷

Observing contemporary culture, Maceina noted the growing polarization in various aspects of life and rejected the notion that these divergent tendencies could be reconciled through Christian synthesis. He implicitly dismissed the idea of a linear progression of history and argued that in the present context, achieving synthesis, as was done in the medieval period, was no longer feasible: “There is no breakthrough in the *single zeitgeist* because *there is no single spirit for the present*. One could speak of a breakthrough at the end of the Middle Ages because there was a ‘*cor unum*’ then, but one cannot speak of it now when the schism [within man into different spirits] that began in the eighteenth century has reached its highest degree. Where there is disorder, there is a lack of unity, and where there is no unity, there can be no *single* movement in *one* direction,” and therefore, “[t]he medieval dominance of the *single spirit* will never return.”⁷⁸ He emphasized the existence of antagonistic tendencies in Europe and urged Catholics to be prepared for the forthcoming battle, suggesting that the resolution would not come through a synthesis of opposing principles but through a confrontation between them.

⁷⁷ Antanas Maceina, “Trys galybės: Buržuazija, prometėjizmas ir krikščionybė” [The three powers: The bourgeoisie, Prometheanism and Christianity], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 18, 411-2, here at: 412.

⁷⁸ Antanas Maceina, “Pedagoginio vitalizmo problema” [The problem of pedagogical vitalism], *Židinys*, 1935, No. 5-6, 535-49, here at: 535-6.

In the lectures on “The Bourgeoisie, Prometheanism, and Christianity” that he gave in the spring semester of 1937 Maceina presented European cultural history as a manifestation of three different moral-psychological dispositions (“eternal spiritual structures”), which, as the title of the course suggested, were the Bourgeois, the Promethean, and the Christian. These moral-psychological dispositions, Maceina explained, were antagonistic to one another; once one of them overpowered the other two within a human, its victory translated into a psychological power over the whole of human’s external conduct, giving it a certain style of life. Subsequently, these types, in Maceina’s presentation, established social structures and public institutions, shaping historical reality; when one “spirit” became dominant, the overpowered ones were pushed to the margins of life. Therefore, the Middle Ages were dominated by the Christian spirit, the Renaissance by the Promethean, and the modern times up until the “great” war by the Bourgeois. In other words, history was permeated by a reciprocal struggle between these three moral-psychological dispositions over dominance in public life.

By employing this tripartite typology of spirits, Maceina aimed to gain insight into the spiritual struggle of the present. In his characterization, European cultural history was shaped by the fight of these supposedly eternal spiritual types that lived within man – as the consequence of every man’s choices, they “objectivized” in the world in particular historical forms. Maceina used this tripartite typology to explain the present moment, arguing that Bolshevism and Nazism were rooted in the same moral-psychological disposition (or, in his words, “spirit”), namely Prometheanism. He viewed the rise of Prometheanism as a decisive point in European cultural history, where the future direction of European culture would be determined: “The general crisis of these days, which is much deeper than the writings attempt to portray, is

nothing other than the struggle between these centrifugal and centripetal forces, between this destruction and creation. The historical antinomies which make life agile, interesting, [and] creative, but at the same time tragic, are today in such a state of tension that it is difficult to speak of their equilibration, of the restoration of balance. The struggle of the antinomies seems to be heading for victory or downfall.”⁷⁹

Maceina viewed both Bolshevism and Nazism as cultural movements rather than purely political ideologies. He saw them as secular and modern forces that were fundamentally incompatible with Christianity. As we may remember, Maceina devoted his first book *National Education* (1934) to rebuke the hypernationalism of Nazism, arguing that it contradicted the Christian understanding of the national community. Later, he extended his analysis to include Bolshevism as well. Starting with 1935, Maceina began describing both movements as manifestations of Prometheanism, characterized by their idealism, creativity, dynamism, and the rejection of God, which resulted in the deification of man. Maceina regarded the materialism of Bolshevik ideology as an idea like any other, indicating that Bolshevism was primarily a cultural phenomenon driven by ideas. Similarly, he viewed Nazism as another historical embodiment of Prometheanism, with its guiding principle being biological vitalism.⁸⁰ He saw them as movements that exalted human power and creativity above all else that disregarded the divine authority. This perspective allowed Maceina to emphasize the cultural and ideological dimensions of Bolshevism and Nazism, showing their incompatibility with Christianity and the dangers they presented to religious beliefs and practices.

⁷⁹ Antanas Maceina, “Trys galybės: Buržuazija, prometėjizmas ir krikščionybė” [The three powers: The bourgeoisie, Prometheanism and Christianity], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 18, 411-2, here at: 411.

⁸⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Prometėjizmo persvara dabarties kultūroje” [The prevalence of Prometheanism in contemporary culture], 1935, *Židinys*, No. 8-9, 138-53, here at: 151.

While Maceina did not develop a comprehensive comparative theory of totalitarianism, he did perceive Bolshevism and Nazism as parallel movements with the shared goal of eradicating religion, depicting them as counter-movements to Christianity. He recognized the threat that Prometheanism posed to Christianity and emphasized its unrestrained creative power. In his 1938 series of essays entitled “The Problem of Prometheanism,” Maceina delved deeper into this concept, building on his theory of three antagonistic spirits. According to Maceina, the Promethean psychology was characterized by an extraordinary affirmation and appreciation of human creativity, because “Promethean anthropology is a creationist anthropology, i.e., one that sees the essence of man in his creative capacity. For Prometheanism, the human creator is the real human.”⁸¹ Maceina argued that figures like Faust in Germanic folklore and Konrad from Adam Mickiewicz’s *Forefathers’ Eve* (1822) exemplified the Promethean spirit, which he believed had no authority, not even God. Maceina pointed to the Renaissance as the most creative period in European cultural history, attributing its achievements to the dominance of the Promethean spirit. It was not a coincidence that during the Renaissance, the theocentric order of the Middle Ages was replaced by anthropocentrism. Maceina contended that in this period of cultural flourishing, humans began to believe in the omnipotence of their own creative powers, bending not only the laws of nature but also the eternal laws of God, including God Himself, to their inner desires.⁸² In other words, Maceina attributed the separation of modern culture from religion to the rise of Prometheanism.

⁸¹ In 1938, this series was originally published in six essays in *Naujoji Romuva* (No. 35-42), however, for the sake of convenience, I will refer to Maceina’s edited writings, in which they were published together. Antanas Maceina, “Prometėjizmo problema” [The problem of Prometheanism], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 2, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 1992), 419.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 454.

Stressing the importance of the present moment for the future of Christianity, Maceina emphasized that the ideologies of Bolshevism and Nazism, driven by the Promethean spirit, were fundamentally incompatible with the Christian faith. He regarded the cultural history of Europe as a cautionary tale, showcasing how the Promethean spirit had previously overcome Christianity and could potentially do so again. Maceina firmly asserted that Bolshevism and Nazism posed the greatest challenge to Christianity in the struggle for the soul of the modern world. He recognized their antagonism towards religion and emphasized the need for Christians to prepare for this significant battle, referencing the eschatological imagery from the Apocalypse: “Christian culture now stands in the face of these two great movements and is preparing for this great struggle of which the Apocalypse speaks, but which is very often forgotten by the representatives of Christianity.”⁸³ In light of this impending struggle, Maceina believed that Catholics had a responsibility to eliminate all manifestations of bourgeois culture from the Church. He called for a cleansing of the Church, rejecting the bourgeois cultural norms: “The philistine bourgeois type of culture ends everywhere. It must end in Christianity as well.”⁸⁴ Maceina viewed this as a necessary step in preparing for the confrontation with Prometheanism and safeguarding the future of Christianity.

Just like other Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, he contended that the present was a liminal moment when the old bourgeois forms of life were disintegrating and the future of European culture was being decided. He suggested: “We have entered a period which creates a kind of void in history, without knowing which [of these

⁸³ Ibid., 463.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

spiritual dispositions] next will give visible shape to the historical process [...].”⁸⁵ Freedom to determine one’s worldview, and therefore to shape historical reality according to it, was central to Maceina’s philosophical anthropology. In his *Introduction to Philosophy of Culture* (1936) Maceina suggested that man was inherently free, therefore he may also choose to turn away from God and corrupt the world:

Will man be God’s collaborator and continuator of the divine creation? That is the most difficult and tragic question. The fate not only of man but of the whole cosmos depends on him. Revelation tells us clearly that not all men answer this question in the affirmative. In the Apocalypse, people are depicted as having “corrupted the earth.” Man, having renounced his destiny through original sin, then tries to correct this mistake through cultural efforts. But it is also possible that man may use his creative efforts to magnify, accentuate and enhance his original error. Then we already have demonic stubbornness and demonic creation, which is essentially opposed to divine creation, which is in reality not creation, but only the corruption of the world. That is why the destroyers of the earth mentioned in the Apocalypse are the adversaries of the Lamb. They have given a negative response, they have refused to continue the divine creation and to redeem nature through the efforts of their spirit. This is a tragic refusal because here man is in conflict not only with the Absolute Creator but also with himself. But man’s freedom is so unlimited that he can and in fact does give this negative answer.⁸⁶

According to Maceina, individual agency played a crucial role in shaping the future of Europe. He emphasized that within each man, there existed a reciprocal struggle between different moral-psychological dispositions. This internal struggle meant that every individual actively participated in the process of shaping history and bore personal responsibility for its outcome. In his view, it was the choices and efforts of individual people that would ultimately determine the course of European history.

Maceina not only delivered lectures on “The Bourgeoisie, Prometheanism, and Christianity” at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy but also delved into the search for the foundations of a new social order. As a Catholic intellectual, he held a

⁸⁵ Antanas Maceina, “Trys galybės: buržuazija, prometėjizmas ir krikščionybė” [The three powers: The bourgeoisie, Prometheanism and Christianity], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 19, 436-7, here at: 437.

⁸⁶ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [The introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 214.

strong belief in the potential of Christianity to regain its prominence in European culture. His analysis suggested that for Christianity to inspire public life once again, Catholics needed to initiate a process of moral and spiritual renewal. Maceina believed that this renewal was crucial in establishing a new social order where the supernatural aspects of Christianity would permeate both public and private spheres. This was a spiritual mission, rather than a political one. In late 1936 and 1937, Maceina emphasized the importance of Catholic Action organizations in driving this renewal process. He stated: “And so, today, we see Christianity coming out into the open, as it were, reborn, reinvigorated, strengthened, and imbued with a new zeal. Whoever understands Cat[holic] Action’s essence, will also understand the power of Christianity in the present struggles.”⁸⁷ During this period, Maceina began advocating for the revitalization of Catholic Action and advocated for an increased role of the laity within the Church.

4. 4. Crisis, Christianity, and Catholic Action

In response to the rising threats of Bolshevism and Nazism, Maceina actively campaigned for moral and spiritual reform. He viewed both communism and fascism as manifestations of Prometheanism, a spiritual tendency diametrically opposed to Christian principles. Maceina considered these ideologies as logical consequences of the anthropocentric shift in European culture. Recognizing the crisis as fundamentally “spiritual,” he argued that it necessitated spiritual solutions. Alongside other Young Catholics, Maceina advocated for Christianity as the only viable means to overcome the contemporary predicament, surpassing the declining influence of liberalism and

⁸⁷ Antanas Maceina, “Trys galybės: buržuazija, prometėjizmas ir krikščionybė” [The three powers: The bourgeoisie, Prometheanism and Christianity], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 19, 436-7, here at: 437.

countering the competing ideologies of communism and fascism. Dissatisfied with the party politics of the 1920s, the Young Catholics sought a fresh platform for Catholic engagement. They placed great emphasis on the role of the Catholic laity, and Maceina emerged as one of the leading voices advocating for Christian-inspired social reform. Through his writings, it becomes evident that Maceina continuously engaged with Christian intellectual traditions, utilizing them as a framework to reconsider the relationship between the Church and the modern world.

In his quest for a renewed approach to Catholic engagement, Maceina argued that Christianity's transformative power should encompass the entirety of reality. He believed that Christianity, at its core, was totalistic, aiming to embrace the entire world and permeate all aspects of life. He explained: “Every religion wants to encompass the *whole* world with *all* its spheres, to permeate all of life, to be a whole and not a part. Every religion is *totalistic*. This lies in the very essence of religion, because it, as man’s relation to God, wants to be an *integral* [*pilnutinis*] rapprochement – of the whole man and all life.”⁸⁸ By stating this, Maceina echoed the ideas already prevalent among contemporary Catholic thinkers in other European countries, who contrasted the concept of a totalitarian Church with the totalitarianism of communist and fascist states. While the former empowered the human “person” and was based on love, the latter sought to subjugate it through coercion. Proponents of this vision aimed to transcend the rigid distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, which underpinned both neo-scholastic and secular conceptualizations of the Church-state relationship. In practice, the vision of the totalitarian Church implied

⁸⁸ Antanas Maceina, “Religinis buržujus” [The religious bourgeois], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 33-34, 612-4, here at: 612.

that every realm of human existence was subject to the transformative power of divine grace, leaving no aspect of life beyond the reach of Christianity.⁸⁹

In his writings from 1937, Maceina employed the concept of totalist Christianity to critique the ecclesiastical authorities, asserting that true Christian totalism was an “organic” one that brought about inner transformation in individuals. “*The renewed rapprochement of cosmos [visatos] with God, which is the essence of Christianity, can only be achieved through the inner transfiguration of man and the world, not through the Christianization of its surface.*”⁹⁰ Authentic Christianity was based on freedom and individual self-determination. He criticized the ecclesiastical authorities, accusing them of exhibiting clericalism and seeking external control over the world through coercive and legalistic means. He believed that this approach did not align with authentic Christianity but instead reflected the spirit of the bourgeoisie. With the decline of bourgeois political and institutional forms, Maceina sought to revitalize the Church, which he felt had adopted bourgeois forms and deviated from its mission of transforming people’s spiritual lives.

In his vision of the Church, Maceina emphasized the spiritual connection among its members while denouncing juridical and institutional structures, which he associated with worldly power and coercion. Reflecting on the history of Christianity, he viewed the demise of the Papal State in the nineteenth century as a triumph for authentic Christianity, representing the defeat of the bourgeois spirit within the ecclesial community. Maceina saw this event as a turning point in favor of Christianity,

⁸⁹ Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in Secular World: Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 77-83.

⁹⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Religinis buržujus” [The religious bourgeois], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 33-34, 612-4, here at: 612.

ushering in an era where inner transformation through love would supersede bourgeois world:

The downfall of the Papal State was therefore not only a simple defeat for the Pope but at the same time a defeat for the Bourgeois spirit within the ecclesial community. It was a salutary turn of history in favor of Christianity. The downfall of the Papal State is a symbol of the new age when Christianity will rule the inner part of man by inner, loving means rather than the surface of life by police-like means. The settlement of the question of the Papal State by the genius Pope Pius XI is, in fact, a prelude to the downfall of the bourgeoisie in the sphere of religion. A small number of years have elapsed since the downfall of the Papal State, but it is already enough to see that, as a result of the loss of worldly prestige, the Church's actual prestige has risen as never before. The loss of the bourgeois forms is a genuine achievement of Christianity, even if clericalism deeply regrets [the loss of] these forms and finds it difficult to come to terms with its new situation.⁹¹

For Maceina, the Church was a community united from within, drawing people together through its spiritual strength. Based on this understanding, he sought to renew the Church.

In the summer of 1936, Maceina initiated a discussion on the renewal of Catholic Action in Lithuania, advocating for a reevaluation of the relationship between Catholicism and public life. In his 1925 encyclical *Quas Primas* Pope Pius XI conceived the Catholic Action movements as a means to challenge the moral degeneration of secular society, stressing the role of Catholic laity in combating the perceived enemies of the Church.⁹² However, in Lithuania, Catholic Action has long been linked to the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party. In the interwar period, a network of Catholic societies existed in the country, with their members often being affiliated with the Party. These organizations were established to represent the interests of specific social strata or social groups and served an important pillar of the Party in society. The Centre of Catholic Action in Lithuania was founded in 1919, but for a long time, it operated only nominally. It was not until 1927, when the Christian

⁹¹ Ibid., 614.

⁹² John Pollard, "Pius XI's Promotion of the Italian Model of Catholic Action in the World-Wide Church," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 63 (4) (2012): 758-84.

Democrats were already in opposition, that Catholic Action began to grow as a separate entity. After the establishment of the Smetona regime, the former party members of the LCDP began focusing on the Catholic Action societies. According to the 1927 Concordat between Lithuania and the Vatican, the state was obliged to impose no restrictions on the activity of Catholic Action. This arrangement made the organization a convenient stronghold for the former Christian Democrats in their agitation against the Smetona regime.⁹³ In 1936, Maceina, reflecting on the present state of the organization, reasoned that “perhaps no thought of the present Pope has gone through crisis so quickly as that of the Catholic Action.”⁹⁴ Maceina criticized the existing form of Catholic Action in Lithuania, asserting that it lacked the ability to inspire moral regeneration. Instead of evolving into a spiritual movement, it had become overly formalized, prioritizing decrees and committee meetings over the transformation of inner lives. Maceina emphasized the need to reintroduce the spiritual dimension that he saw as entirely missing from the current state of Catholic Action.

Maceina argued for changes in the current practices of Catholic apostolate, primarily by granting more authority to the laity and expanding the scope of their activities. He stressed the crucial role of the laity and called for the emancipation of Catholic Action from the influence of the clergy and formal organizational structures. The Episcopate and the clergy played important roles in Lithuanian society, but Maceina believed that it was necessary to reevaluate the situation in order for the Church to reclaim the unbelieving masses. Instead of relying solely on institutional frameworks, the

⁹³ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania (1918-1940): Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 227-34.

⁹⁴ Antanas Maceina, “Katalikiškosios akcijos krizė” [The crisis of Catholic Action], *XX amžius*, August 3, 1936, 3-4, here at: 3.

Church's appeal to the masses would be better served by the personal examples set by laity. Maceina envisioned Catholic Action as a spiritual movement that aimed at total regeneration, penetrating all domains of modern life, asserting that "*The Cat[holic] Action should be detached from each specific, narrow manifestation of life*. It must not be tied to any philosophical current or school, to any style of art, to any economic structure of the country, to any social order or organization. The Cath[olic] Action is Catholic, hence universal. Just as Christianity penetrated all spheres of pagan life in the first centuries, so too must Cat[holic] Action penetrate every sphere of modern life in the modern era, which has become to a large extent agonized."⁹⁵ According to Maceina, the apostolate of Catholicism necessitated flexibility and adaptability to varying circumstances. It should rely on personal initiatives and the collaborative efforts of individual groups rather than strictly adhering to institutional protocols and legalistic formulas.

In line with the philosophy of culture that he expounded in his lectures, Maceina consistently emphasized the significance of the subject in combating the prevailing atheism of contemporary society. He asserted that the key to this struggle lay in the inner experience and the quest for a personal connection with God. Maceina asserted that "*European atheism will be defeated when the void in its spirit is filled, when a new understanding of God is created, when the concept of God grows from the very depths of this new spirit*."⁹⁶ He rejected the notion that scholastic proofs of God, rooted solely in reason and logic, could inspire a religious revival. The modern individual perceived the world in an entirely different manner, therefore Catholics had to use different means. Maceina described how, for the people of the Middle Ages, the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁶ Antanas Maceina, "Dievo ieškojimas" [The search for God], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 13-14, 290-4, here at: 291.

world was akin to an enchanted being, teeming with mysteries, spirits, and secret life. Yet, in the modern era, the world had become lucid, comprehensible, interpreted, and explored. The mysteries of nature had been reduced to mechanical laws, and the wonders of nature had been transformed into mere folklore and legends. What ancient humans had sought to achieve through magic and enchantments, modern humans now accomplished through technology.⁹⁷ Maceina argued that, as a result, modern individuals could not find God by observing the external world; the only available path to God was through inner experience. He proclaimed: “For the new humanity, all that is left is to return from the confused world to its soul and through it to the God that it seeks.”⁹⁸ Maceina drew inspiration from figures like Saint Augustine, whom he regarded as a paradigm of personal religiosity, and whose example he believed should be followed in modern times.

Maceina’s views were shared by Yla, a significant figure in shaping a new generation of Catholic priests. Yla, a professor at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and at Kaunas theological seminary, emphasized the importance of the subject in pastoral theology. Religion, according to him, had to be “*grounded from within*.”⁹⁹ He advocated for a new approach to pastoral care that went beyond superficial appearances and religious formalities, in order “to make religion not just a matter of form, appearance or the fulfillment of religious formulae, but something to be lived and on which to base one’s whole life.”¹⁰⁰ Similar to Maceina, Yla highlighted the emotive and communal aspects of religion as crucial in the Christian reclamation of the unbelieving masses. He argued that experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit

⁹⁷ Ibid., 294.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Stasys Yla, “Nauja šių dienų pastoracijos kryptis ir būdingieji jos bruožai” [A new direction in present day pastoral care and its characteristic features], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938, No. 4, 185-97, here at: 185.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

within oneself should precede the reliance on rational arguments.¹⁰¹ As a young and enthusiastic teacher, Yla fostered personal relationships with his students, in contrast to the restrictive atmosphere of the seminary. One of his students later remembered: “The younger generation admired such ideas and considered priest Stasys Yla a brave and appealing exponent of them. The old generation, especially the hierarchy, had a different view. And the then rector of Kaunas theological seminary, Can[on] Pr[anas] Penkauskas, and even the Kaunas Archbishop Metropolitan J[uozas] Skvireckas were skeptical about the priest’s new steps. On many occasions, he had to visit them to justify and defend his position.”¹⁰²

The Young Catholics sought inspiration from Catholic efforts for moral and spiritual renewal beyond Lithuania. They expressed interest in the conservative revolutionary Rexist movement led by Léon Degrelle, a young and radical Catholic intellectual who belonged to the same generation as the Young Catholics. Some of the young Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals even had the opportunity to meet Degrelle in person. In 1930, prior to Degrelle establishing his movement, Dielininkaitis had a chance encounter with him during a meeting at the Centre of Catholic Action in Leuven. Yla was another Lithuanian Catholic intellectual who met Degrelle. In 1935, while living abroad, he visited the editorial office of Degrelle’s edited *Christus Rex* newspaper and conducted an interview discussing Degrelle’s ideas and the goals of the Rexist movement. This interview, published in 1936 by *XX Amžius*, introduced the Belgian movement as a fresh Catholic initiative to revitalize Belgian life to Lithuanian audiences.

¹⁰¹ 187.

¹⁰² Pranas Gaida, “Naujojo stiliaus kunigas” [The priest of new style], *Aidai*, 1986, No. 3, 182-91, accessed on May 14, 2022.
https://www.aidai.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8313:pa&catid=459:3-nr&Itemid=526.

During his time abroad, Yla was exposed to new methods of pastoral care and became intrigued by the Rexists, a Catholic movement striving to rejuvenate Christianity in the face of modern challenges. In his writings from the summer of 1936, Yla portrayed Rexism as a genuinely Catholic movement that effectively adapted Christian principles to meet the demands of the modern times: “Rexism, it seems to me, has to be seen as a new and very serious factor, dictated by the times, but growing out of the old ideas of Christian doctrine, and coming out to cure the social ills of the Belgian people.”¹⁰³ Initially, the Rexists began as a circle of Catholic intellectuals advocating for “revolution” and spiritual rebirth, reminiscent of the French *Esprit* group. Over time, they transformed into a political party that achieved some success in the parliamentary elections of 1936. By the late 1930s, Degrelle became a radical Walloon nationalist and a collaborator with the German occupiers during Second World War.¹⁰⁴ In 1936, however, based on the meeting with Degrelle a year prior, Yla found the early Rexists appealing as an example of a Catholic endeavor to renew political life.¹⁰⁵ At that moment of time, it was hard not to see a certain parallel between the Rexists and the Young Catholics. Both groups comprised young laymen driven by a desire to revitalize Catholicism and advance national culture. It comes as no surprise that the initial achievements of the Rexists captured the attention of young Catholic intellectuals in Lithuania.

¹⁰³ While the interview was published in 1936, Yla noted that “[a]lmost a year has passed since this conversation with Degrelle,” see Stasys Yla, “Mano pasimatymas su rexistų vadu Leonu Degrelle” [My encounter with Leon Degrelle, the leader of the Rexists], *XX amžius*, June 27, 1936, 3; Stasys Yla, “Mano pasimatymas su rexistų vadu Leonu Degrelle” [My encounter with Leon Degrelle, the leader of the Rexists], *XX amžius*, June 30, 1936, 4.

¹⁰⁴ For Leon Degrelle and the Rexist movement see Martin Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium: Leon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement, 1940–1944* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ “Rex. Rex atsiradimas. Degrelle’o asmuo. Rex, kaip reakcija prieš sustingimą. Rex politikoje” [The Rex. The emergence of the Rex. The personality of Degrelle. The Rex as a reaction against stagnation], *XX amžius*, August, 24, 1936, 4.

The initial interest shown by *XX Amžius* in the Rexist movement led some historians to speculate that the Young Catholics were particularly inspired by the Belgian group.¹⁰⁶ However, a closer examination of their writings reveals a more nuanced situation. These sporadic contacts did not lead to a significant collaboration between the two Catholic groups, nor did the young Lithuanian Catholics position themselves as followers of Degrelle. In fact, subsequent articles published in *XX Amžius* indicate a waning interest in Degrelle and his movement, and even a negative perception of the Belgian group by 1937. A notable example highlighting this shift in perspective can be seen in the comments made by Dielininkaitis during the 1937 by-elections in Belgium, where the newly emerged Rexistists were competing with the established Catholic Party for the Catholic electorate. In his writings about the Belgian election in *XX Amžius*, Dielininkaitis expressed his support for traditional political Catholicism embodied by the Catholic Party, while dismissing the Rexistists as a dangerous force. His criticism towards Degrelle was particularly harsh, characterizing him as a proponent of dictatorship and totalism.¹⁰⁷ By 1937, *XX Amžius* had stopped paying attention to the Belgian group, suggesting a waning interest and a negative perception of the Rexistists.

Refuting Degrelle, Dielininkaitis celebrated the defeat of the Rexistists and the electoral success of the conservative Catholic Party led by Paul van Zeeland. For the Lithuanian intellectual, this victory represented the triumph of constitutional freedoms and democratic order. He expressed his view in *XX Amžius*, stating that “Van Zeeland’s great and effective victory shows that a democratic and parliamentary system, without

¹⁰⁶ Ramūnas Labanauskas, “Jaunujų katalikų sąjūdis: Politinės formavimosi aplinkybės” [The movement of the Young Catholics: The political circumstances of formation], *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai*, 2006, No. 6-7, 248-57.

¹⁰⁷ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Po Van Zeelando ir Degrellio dvikovės” [After the duel between Van Zeeland and Degrelle], *XX amžius*, April 13, 1937, 3; Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Po Van Zeelando ir Degrellio dvikovės” [After the duel between Van Zeeland and Degrelle], *XX amžius*, April 14, 1937, 4.

sacrificing its principles but determined to renew and reform itself following the requirements of the present time, is capable of impressing the masses of the present day, of overcoming crises and of winning the great battles of life.”¹⁰⁸ Dielininkaitis shared with the other Young Catholics a disdain for the politics of the 1920s, but he was interested in the potential for political renewal. He argued that modern parliamentary systems needed to be updated to meet the demands of contemporary life, stating: “Where political institutions have not been gradually reformed in their own time, they are not properly adapted to the very complex role that the modern state has to play in various areas of national and international life.”¹⁰⁹ Although not much is known about his political sympathies at the time, Dielininkaitis expressed support for the *Parti Démocrate Populaire* (PDP) in France, a centrist party inspired by Christian democracy and social Catholicism. The PDP positioned itself as non-denominational but drew on the social doctrine of the Church, emphasizing social justice and labor protection. By the mid-1930s, both Dielininkaitis and the PDP leaders increasingly expressed support for corporatist reforms. However, the PDP remained a minor political force in French politics, struggling to garner broader electoral support.¹¹⁰ Dielininkaitis was acquainted with the French party during his time in Paris, and as mentioned in chapter 2, he even signed its manifesto in 1931. Even while living in Lithuania, he continued to support the PDP.¹¹¹ His articles from 1937 anticipated Dielininkaitis’s attempts to renew Catholic politics and democratic order in 1938 and 1939, which will be further discussed in chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Po Van Zeelando ir Degrellio dvikovės” [After the duel between Van Zeeland and Degrelle], *XX amžius*, April 14, 1937, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Po Van Zeelando ir Degrellio dvikovės” [After the duel between Van Zeeland and Degrelle], *XX amžius*, April 13, 1937, 3.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Claude Delbreil, “Christian Democracy and Centrism: The Popular Democratic Party in France,” *Political Catholicism in Europe*, vol. 1, ed. Wolfram Kaiser and Helmut Wohnout (London and New York, 2005), 95-100.

¹¹¹ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Prancūzija streiko metu” [France during the strike], *XX amžius*, July 26, 1937, 3.

Dielininkaitis's support for democracy was evident in his writings, even if he did not write much during this period. In 1937, he published a series of articles on schooling freedom, which featured adapted translations from his doctoral dissertation originally written in French. This marked the first time that excerpts from his work were made available to Lithuanian readers. In these articles, Dielininkaitis emphasized the democratic state as the most favorable political form, primarily because it acknowledged the internal differences within society. According to Dielininkaitis, the democratic state allowed for the coexistence and equal functioning of diverse worldviews and social groups that professed different ideologies. He viewed the democratic state as distinct from an exclusivist worldview, emphasizing its proclaimed tolerance and neutrality in matters of conscience.¹¹² Dielininkaitis believed that democratic order ensured the freedom of social groupings to organize and act according to their convictions and democratic government was more responsive to their interests.

4. 5. Catholics and the Fall of the Capitalist Order

The experience of crisis led the Young Catholics to rethink ways in which Catholics were engaging with the modern world, and it was Maceina who played a significant role in shaping their response. In many ways, in his reflections on the modern culture he represented a thinking that was shared by other Young Catholics gathered around the newspaper *XX Amžius*. Responding to the threat of Bolshevism and Nazism, Maceina became one of the leading voices among Lithuanian Catholics advocating for social reform, which he considered a spiritual project. The Great Depression of the

¹¹² Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Valstybė, auklėjimas ir mokyklinė laisvė" [The state, education and schooling freedom], *Lietuvos mokykla*, 1937, No. 4, 247.

1930s seemed to indicate that the liberal order was living its final days, therefore he urged Catholics to begin creating a new social order. Starting in late 1936, Maceina proposed a certain Christian-inspired “third way” that sought to find a new way between capitalism and communism. His vision entailed a gradual yet comprehensive transformation of social relations, beginning with a reassessment of the moral commitments held by Catholics themselves. This was perceived as a spiritual mission and Maceina urged Catholics to embrace it wholeheartedly.

When thinking about the new order, Maceina’s primary concern was the perceived threat of a global communist revolution, which prompted him to search for a certain alternative to capitalism. Since the summer of 1936, Maceina was preoccupied with the ideas of Christian renewal, and the annual conference of the Centre of Catholic Action in December of the same year provided him with an opportunity to articulate his views. As one of the key speakers, Maceina delivered a public lecture entitled “The Social Justice of Catholics,” where he passionately expressed the belief that Catholics must take the lead in initiating social reform. Maceina underscored the urgency of addressing the issue of social justice and was willing to criticize the ecclesiastical leadership for its perceived reluctance to put Catholic social teachings into practice. He argued that while Catholics had emphasized the importance of the social question in theory, they had too often conformed to capitalist practices in their daily lives. Asserting that bourgeois society was approaching its inevitable end, Maceina urged the Church to break free from its bourgeois habits. He rejected the notion that Catholicism was disconnected from any specific social or economic system, asserting that such a stance prevented Catholics from initiating social change. If Catholics genuinely believed that Christianity could solve the social question, Maceina argued, they needed to present a positive vision of social order rooted in

Christian principles. He stated: “If Catholicism proclaims that it is the only one that can liberate people from social ills, it *must* show in what way it will do so. It must reveal *its* system, *its* plans, *its* proposed way of social life, because only in this way can social claims [that Catholics make] be understood and justified. *Dissociation from profane systems is precisely what must lead Catholics to the development of a religious, [and] social system.*”¹¹³ Maceina’s goal was to expand upon the principles of Catholic social teachings and develop a comprehensive vision of a new social order that would replace capitalism.

Maceina’s lecture was significant not only because he advocated for the construction of a new social order, but also because he sought to redefine the Christian canon of thought. This illustrates the interconnectedness of these two issues. Maceina distanced himself from Neo-Scholasticism and searched for a new way to actualize the Christian tradition. To explain his vision of society, Maceina adopted a genealogical approach, arguing that Catholicism’s connection to the Thomist legacy was the cause of the ecclesiastical hierarchy’s present inability to respond to the challenges of modernity. Drawing on the ideas of the German sociologist and philosopher Werner Sombart in his work *Der Bourgeois* (1913), where he traced the origins of capitalism to the late Middle Ages, Maceina argued that the medieval scholasticism, and Thomas Aquinas in particular, contributed to the rise of capitalism. Maceina suggested that Thomas Aquinas, who since the late nineteenth century was institutionalized by Leo XIII as a key intellectual resource in the Catholic tradition, reformed Christian ethics, making it less sensitive to the questions of inequality, supportive of existing social hierarchies, and ultimately compatible with the capitalist ethos. It was unlikely, Maceina reasoned,

¹¹³ Antanas Maceina, “Socialinis katalikų teisingumas” [The social justice of Catholics], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 10, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2005), 341-64, here at: 343.

that capitalism would have become so powerful if Thomist ethics had not provided it with theoretical support.

Criticizing the medieval Thomism, Maceina believed that the neo-scholastic orthodoxy represented the main intellectual obstacle for Catholics who were aiming for the transformation of social relations. Describing the medieval Thomist as the intellectual origin of modern rationalism and capitalist order, Maceina argued that there was no necessary link between Catholicism and Neo-Scholasticism. “Today it is common knowledge that the Aristotelian-Thomist strand has taken over in Catholicism. In philosophy, theology, and even in questions of practical life we think in Aristotelian-Thomist terms. This strand [however] is not the same as Catholicism itself. It is one of the possible forms in which the practical life of Catholicism is expressed. But this form has a great significance for all the new ages of the life of the Church. And so, it has been asserted that *Thomism has precisely laid the foundation for capitalism*.”¹¹⁴ To establish a new social order, he contended, Catholics must distance themselves from the legacy of Neo-Scholasticism and start thinking beyond it, because it was the Thomist conceptions that prevented Catholics from thinking in new ways about social order. “If capitalism takes its origin from scholasticism, and if we today think in scholastic terms, it goes without saying that the Church’s struggle against capitalism struggles to find acceptance in our hearts and even more struggles to be put into practice.”¹¹⁵ In other words, the reform of social life required finding a more profound source of inspiration in the Christian tradition.

Distancing from Thomist legacy and looking for a more dynamic perspective for social action, Maceina claimed that it was necessary to return to the supposedly more

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 354.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 356.

radical traditions of Christianity. He found inspiration for social reform in the Church Fathers, particularly stressing the communal and egalitarian aspects of early Christianity. According to him, it was the early Christianity that represented the essence of Catholicism:

[...] in Patristic writings we find little about justice, but a lot about love. *The social theories of the Church Fathers are based on the principle of Caritas.* [...]. Catholicism under persecution has done more for the social sphere than it did when it was freed. In the Middle Ages, when life was less complicated, the absence of a social Catholic system was not so acutely felt. But in the modern times, when capitalism has grown and the masses of people have become the slaves of a handful of the rich, it has become apparent how far Catholics have fallen behind in the social sphere, and how far they are behind the first Christians.¹¹⁶

The restoration of the Patristic moral sensibilities, Maceina insisted, meant that *caritas*, or selfless neighborly love, had to become a central principle of Catholic social action and the foundation of new social order.

This emphasis on Patristic Christianity implied that Catholicism was much more radical in its social vision than the current ecclesiastic leadership allowed it. By making the principles of early Christianity into the foundation of the new order, he reasoned, Catholics could establish a communism of love, a social order that would implement the redistribution of wealth as the practical realization of Christian ethics. Maceina even suggested that the Church had to set an example by redistributing its lands to the poor: “The reform of the Lithuanian Church’s own lands would undermine the roots of communism in our country. After such a march, no one would dare to say that the Church is a supporter of the rich. Had the Church of Spain understood this, hundreds of thousands would not have been killed today in that most Catholic country.”¹¹⁷ If Catholics wanted to win over the modern man in the fight

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 345.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 362.

against communism, Maceina made it clear, they had to dissociate from capitalism and establish new social order founded on Christian principles.

Maceina's lecture, attended by Catholic laity and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, stirred up a great uproar in Lithuanian public life. Noteworthy, Maceina's ideas were received positively by a substantial part of the other members of the organization, with his lecture frequently interrupted by applause in support; by the end of the congress, he was voted into the board of the Centre for Catholic Action. However, Maceina's advocated ideas were met with resistance from the conservative mainstream of the Church. His appeals for social justice were not met with the Archbishop Skvireckas's approval and therefore Maceina's candidacy to the board of the organization was not confirmed.¹¹⁸ Following the lecture, Maceina fell into disfavor with the ecclesiastical leadership, which continued into the post-war years. Noteworthy, despite being immensely productive, he did not get promoted in his position at the university, which required the approval from the clerical authorities, for the rest of the interwar years remaining *Privatdozent*. As a response to his social radicalism, the young Catholic intellectual was warned by the ecclesiastical hierarchy that if he would continue making similar pronouncements, he would be deprived of his *missio canonica* that is, the permission to teach at the Catholic institutions.¹¹⁹ Dissatisfied with the Young Catholics, the Archbishop Skvireckas even initiated the relaunch of the Catholic journal *Draugija* (*The Community*), which at the turn of the twentieth century played an important role in gathering Catholic intellectuals for the defense of the Catholic

¹¹⁸ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 174.

¹¹⁹ Ignas Medžiukas, "Profesorių Maceiną prisimenant" [Remembering Professor Maceina], Antanas Maceina, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 14, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 2008), 525-8, here at: 526.

cause against liberal and socialist intelligentsia; relaunched in 1937, the conservative *Draugija* continuously attacked the Young Catholics.

After receiving much criticism from conservative Catholic circles, Maceina regretted that he had not attracted support from the ecclesiastical leadership. Feeling the pressure from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the young philosopher believed that the leadership of the Church failed to recognize the threat presented by communism, him speaking that “the old guard, which reads almost nothing, began to whisper that Maceina was a heretic, that he would soon have to be expelled from the Church [...]. From all this, I got the impression that our Catholic leaders are lagging half a century behind.”¹²⁰ The reactions that Maceina received after his lecture probably only affirmed his belief that the ecclesiastical structures were permeated with the bourgeois spirit. Many years later, in the letter to Yla, he recalled his problematic relationship with the authorities of the Lithuanian Catholic Church during his youth: “Sometimes I even smile remembering all these ‘struggles’ and ‘persecutions.’ On the other hand, however, our past sometimes frightens me. Your sentence [in the previous letter] ‘We were suspected [with heresies] already in Kaunas, and both of us were threatened with dismissal from the Faculty expresses my fears beautifully. [...] What scares me is this: what could all that suspicion, public and behind the scenes, all that ‘stick’ pinning, writing, gossiping about You and me have led [us] into?’”¹²¹ Although not much is known about this confrontation with the ecclesiastical authorities, the backlash was intense enough for Maceina to consider switching faculties and joining the secular Faculty of Humanities. This switch would have had serious implications for

¹²⁰ As quoted in Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 176.

¹²¹ Antanas Maceina to Stasys Yla, 17 December 1978, [Maceina, Antanas and Stasys Yla], “Idėjų ir širdžių sąsajos: Antano Maceinos ir Stasio Ylos laišakai” [The links between ideas and hearts: The correspondence of Antanas Maceina and Stasys Yla], ed. Gediminas Mikėlaitis, *Metai*, 2008, No. 8-9, 131-52, here at: 148.

Maceina's public standing as a Catholic intellectual, however, in the end, Maceina chose to stay at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.

Not confined to discussions in the Catholic press, the proposals presented by Maceina at the congress had a strong public resonance and were particularly well received in the leftist press. Among Catholics, many criticized his ideas, while others suggested that despite some of his overly radical-sounding proposals Maceina was correct to call Catholics for social renewal. In some circles, such ideas won him a reputation as a Christian Communist.¹²² The other Young Catholics meanwhile supported Maceina; once the candidacy of Maceina to the board of the Centre of Catholic Action was rejected by the ecclesiastical leadership, Pakštas and Dielininkaitis, who were elected to the board as well, withdrew their candidacies, demonstrating the internal unity of the group. Following Maceina's lecture, their jointly edited *XX Amžius* was filled with follow-up discussions on the moral and spiritual reform that would transform the social order. Ambrazevičius for example argued: "*Whether the ways and means proposed [by Maceina] were right is a different question, but the very intention not to wait, not to sit on one's hands, but to work, and to begin with oneself, is a healthy subject for discussion.*"¹²³ Dielininkaitis meanwhile agreed with Maceina, arguing that Catholics had a duty to start moral reform from themselves: "to remove the barriers that separate the noble doctrine of the Church from the practice of many Catholics themselves."¹²⁴ Lithuania was living in a period of stagnation and indecision, he argued, and it was high time to start a reform of its institutions and moral customs. Inspired by Catholic social teachings, Catholics had to start social renewal directed

¹²² Valdas Pruskus, *Socialinė katalikybė tarpukario Lietuvoje* [Social Catholicism in interwar Lithuania] (Vilnius: Eikoma, 2011), 243.

¹²³ Juozas Ambrazevičius, "Nuo autokritikos į blaivią kūrybą" [From self-criticism to sober creation], *XX amžius*, January 2, 1937, 3.

¹²⁴ Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Už pastangas gyvenimui atnaujinti" [For the efforts to renew life], *XX amžius*, January 20, 1937, 3.

against the manifestations of the bourgeois capitalist spirit “in the worst sense of the word,” which, according to him, was taking root very quickly in Lithuanian society.

In their calls for social reform, the young Catholic intellectuals were inspired by the encyclicals of *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII and *Quadragesimo Anno* by Pope Pius XI, to which they referred in their writings. Among them, the sociologist Dielininkaitis was particularly interested in Catholic social thought. After coming back from his studies in France, Dielininkaitis was one of the most important labor activists in the country, in 1934 becoming the Vice-Chair of the largest labor union in Lithuania, the Catholic Labor Union. In his writings he repeatedly expressed his support for labor rights, urging to organize corporate bodies that would represent the interests of professions. Simultaneously, he explicitly renounced attempts to establish the corporatist order by the Smetona regime, arguing that the introduction of corporatism must be separated both from changing the political system and from expanding the power of the state at the expense of the initiative from below. In his 1937 pamphlet *Pius XI and Catholic Social Doctrine* (*Pijus XI ir socialinė katalikų doktrina*) Dielininkaitis urged for a form of Catholic activism that combined the anti-statist and pluralist elements of Catholic social thought, stressing the importance of trade unions and private initiative in the pursuit of social justice. The aim of the teaching set out in the papal encyclicals, Dielininkaitis made it clear, was not solely the improvement of the social situation of the workers, but the renewal of their moral life and bringing the secularized sections of society back to Christianity.¹²⁵

In his public lectures, Dielininkaitis frequently invoked the examples of various Catholic social movements from Francophone European countries. These movements

¹²⁵ Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Pijus XI ir socialinė katalikų doktrina* [Pius XI and Catholic social doctrine] (Kaunas: 1937).

became the model for Dielininkaitis's own organizational activities and social engagement. He was particularly impressed by the Young Christian Workers Movement (*Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne*), known by its abbreviated name as the Jocism. This movement, which began as an initiative of the Centre of Catholic Action in Belgium, received great success in France in the 1930s. Inspired by papal social teachings, the Jocists sought to renew the religious life of the working classes; they aimed to counterweight communist influences with similar Catholic worker activism.¹²⁶ Incidentally, Dielininkaitis's study years in Paris coincided with the period of the movement's rapid expansion in France. Thus, in the 1936 conference, in which Maceina spoke of the need for social reform, Dielininkaitis gave a lecture on "New Catholic Social Movements," in which he pointed to the Jocists as one of the primary examples.¹²⁷ On another occasion, giving an overview of the Young Christian Workers congress in Paris, Dielininkaitis named the event a "triumph," describing the Jocists as people whose "activity, ingenuity, sacrifice to the ideal, and success at present amaze the world."¹²⁸ He asserted that the pastoral methods of the Jocists contributed to the revival of religiosity among French workers. Therefore, it is not surprising that Dielininkaitis offered this initiative as a role model for Lithuanian Catholics as well.

The Young Catholics asserted the primacy of the personality, which had to form life and fight against the bourgeois spirit from taking root in Lithuanian society. Their declared enemy was the bourgeois stratum of society that had emerged alongside the growth of urban culture, spreading the bourgeois spirit. Young Catholic intellectuals

¹²⁶ Oscar L. Arnal, "Toward a Lay Apostolate of the Workers: Three Decades of Conflict for the French *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* (1927–1956)," *Catholic Historical Review* 73 (2) (1987): 211–27.

¹²⁷ For the summary of his lecture see "Katalikų vadų suvažiavimas baigėsi" [The meeting of Catholic leadership ended], *XX amžius*, December 31, 1936, 2.

¹²⁸ Pr. D. [Pranas Dielininkaitis], "Jaunųjų Krikščionių Darbininkų triumfas Paryžiuje" [The triumph of Young Christian Workers in Paris], *Darbininkas*, July 24, 1937, 1.

warned that the spread of this spirit in society showed signs of moral corruption: a tendency towards materialism and hedonism, rationalism, an adaptation to circumstances and political situations without trying to change anything, a lack of one's principles, a rejection of religious attitudes, and a rejection of civic-mindedness. They linked the bourgeois spirit with capitalism, arguing that it had a corrupting influence on modern sociability. In the pages of the *XX Amžius* the Young Catholics warned against Catholics' complicity with the capitalist social and economic order, with Maceina becoming the leading voice of the critique of Catholic passivity in the face of increasing crisis. Maceina for example explained: "The life permeated by the bourgeois spirit has distanced man from nature, has broken up deep and delicate relationships in the community, has impoverished man intellectually, [and] has pushed him into a nervous pursuit of novelty and sensation."¹²⁹ Similarly, Dielininkaitis explained: "As a result, to a considerable extent, there is a constant occurrence in our country of excesses which are becoming a real misfortune for our nation, of speculation in one's convictions, of a considerable part of the so-called intelligentsia being quite hastily alienated from the social strata from which they come, of people being treated not based on their intrinsic worth but only based on their wealth, their position or other motives of utility, etc."¹³⁰

4. 6. The Social Justice of Maceina

Continuing the discussions among Catholic thinkers about new social order, Maceina provided the most extensive treatment of the problem of social reform in his book

¹²⁹ Antanas Maceina, "Eikime į vieškelius" [Let's go to the roads], *XX amžius*, January 16, 1937, 6.

¹³⁰ Pranas Dielininkaitis, "Už pastangas gyvenimui atnaujinti" [For efforts to renew life], *XX amžius*, January 20, 1937, 3.

Social Justice (Socijalinis teisingumas, 1938), which was subtitled “The Collapse of Capitalism and the Social Principles of New Order.” In this book, drawing on the French “non-conformist” personalist thinker Emmanuel Mounier, Maceina developed further the themes from his earlier lecture at the annual congress of the Centre of Catholic Action of 1936, attempting to provide a personalist account of the new social order.¹³¹ Similarly to his French counterpart, Maceina aimed at the restoration of human value, which, in his account, was denied in the capitalist order, perceiving the establishment of new social order as a moral and spiritual project.¹³² He asserted that the social question was a phenomenon unique to modernity and was not simply an outcome of economic poverty: “*The social problem in our time is first and foremost a moral problem. It is a certain attitude towards man and at the same time a struggle against this attitude: a struggle that is hidden, but grave and cruel.*”¹³³ The nature of the problem meant that the renewal of social relations had to start with a certain moral and spiritual reform, which would restore the primacy of human “person,” overcoming both the present capitalist order as well as the communist attempts to overthrow it. Thus, he developed a vision of modernity that was simultaneously anti-liberal, anti-communist, and anti-fascist.

While developing the foundational principles of the new social order, Maceina drew heavily from his philosophy of culture as outlined in his 1936 book, *Introduction to Philosophy of Culture*. He criticized the capitalist order for depersonalizing modern man and depriving him of creativity. To address this, Maceina advocated for the

¹³¹ In his book Maceina was particularly inspired by Mounier’s *From Capitalist Property to Human Property* (1936), extensively referring to its German translation: Emmanuel Mounier, *Vom kapitalistischen Eigentumsbegriff zum Eigentum des Menschen* (Luzern: Vita Nova Verlag, 1936).

¹³² On different kinds of personalist thought see Sarah Shortall, “Theology and the Politics of Christian Human Rights,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79 (3) (2018): 445-60.

¹³³ Antanas Maceina, *Socijalinis teisingumas: Kapitalizmo žlugimas ir naujos santvarkos socijaliniai principai* [Social justice: The collapse of capitalism and the social principles of new order] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1938), 4.

reintroduction of the “craftsman principle,” which he believed existed during the medieval period. This principle would supplant the prevailing focus on machine work and restore a sense of personalization and creativity to labor. Maceina acknowledged the industrial advancements of modernity but argued that “the *spirit* which governs these achievements must change.”¹³⁴ This spirit that governed modern industrialism, according to Maceina, was profit. If the principle of profit were abolished in the economy, the factory would be transformed into a workshop, and the machine into a tool. In this way, the social question as a moral problem would be solved: “If we take the principle of profit out of the factory, it will cease to have any meaning.”¹³⁵ In his vision, the introduction of the “craftsman principle” would liberate man from serving the machine and make work personal and creative endeavor. Each man would have the opportunity to create according to their own volition, thereby transforming work into an act of self-expression and creativity. Maceina envisioned a society where everyone could become a creator, bringing forth new forms from their inner depths. “The machine realizes only the technical moment of work. The idea is already given to the machine. The craftsman, on the other hand, both creates the idea and realizes it in the material.”¹³⁶ Thus, in contemplating the principles of the new social order, Maceina placed human creativity, a central theme in his philosophy of culture, at the core of his vision. In his vision, he stressed the creative agency of man, envisioning a society where work transcended mere functionality and became a fulfilling and self-expressive activity.

Inspired by his reading of Sombart, Maceina sketched the history of Christian thought, which for him served as the genealogy of the present social and economic discontents;

¹³⁴ Ibid., 149.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 148.

in it, medieval scholasticism marked a significant turning point in Western history. If other Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, such as Šalkauskis for instance, located the advent of modern worldview in the Renaissance when the theocentric worldview was replaced with the anthropocentric one, Maceina radicalized this view by presenting the anthropocentric turn in the West as a consequence of the reception of Aristotelian philosophy in the medieval Christian thought: “*the victory of Christianized Aristotle in the West was, in reality, the victory of the anthropocentric spirit.*”¹³⁷ According to him, it was medieval scholasticism, and its most prominent thinker Aquinas in particular, that derailed the Church from the spiritualist tendency, which, in Maceina’s view, was the kernel of authentic Christianity. The reception of Aristotelian philosophy in medieval scholastic thought planted the seeds of modern rationalism and instrumental reasoning in the Western mind. Medieval scholasticism, Maceina was clear, bore the intellectual origins of the modern social and economic order. He summarized his argument in the following way: “*capitalism has accomplished in economics what Aristotelianism allowed in ethics.*”¹³⁸ This portrayal of the history of Christian thought was a conscious subversion of the then-dominant strand of thought in Catholic circles, Neo-Scholasticism. This genealogy of modernity that he presented allowed Maceina to reiterate in the clearest possible terms that Catholicism must come back to its supposedly more radical roots, and the eternal truth of Christianity was to be purified of the elements that contradicted it.

In searching for inspiration for social reform, Maceina made recourse to the Church Fathers whose thought he saw as an expression of the spiritual tendency of Christianity. Perceiving early Christianity as a model of communal relations, Maceina constructed an elaborative argument to demonstrate that the redistribution of property

¹³⁷ Ibid., 85.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 94.

was a long-forgotten Christian idea. Drawing on the Church Fathers, Maceina concluded that “[p]rivate property must be socialized [*suvisuomeninta*] without abolishing it.”¹³⁹ In his vision, the separation between the public and the private was blurred. According to the early Christian theology, Maceina explained, the ownership of property was an ontological category, however, its usage was a moral one. The redistribution of the wealth was nothing else than borrowing and therefore it did not contradict the right to have personal property: “By owning a thing, a man asserts oneself as a person. By using a thing, a man asserts oneself as a member of society.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, in the new social order, the moral dimension of the idea of property would be acknowledged. Maceina even added an annex to his book, in which referring to the writings of the Church Fathers he sketched the concept of property as it was understood by the early Christians. He concluded that the early Christian theologians agreed that wealth “in its origin and purpose is *communal*.”¹⁴¹

Stressing the importance of Patristic theology, Maceina repeated once again that the connection between Catholicism and Neo-Scholasticism had to be undone. If the “error” of Christian thought in the medieval period led to the rise of capitalism, then Catholic dissociation from the bourgeois capitalist order necessitated the rejection of the Thomist legacy in contemporary Catholic thought. This, Maceina implied, would lead to a more authentic understanding of Christianity. In other words, Maceina’s vision of new social order was connected to the simultaneous rearrangement of the Christian cannon of thought. It was necessary to uncover the early Christian understanding of property, according to which, in Maceina’s telling, property was subjected to the requirements of Christian ethics. Therefore, he perceived social

¹³⁹ Ibid., 174.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 165.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 241.

reform and the renewal of Christianity as interconnected issues. For Maceina, the restoration of the Patristic theology was a way towards the affirmation of the spiritual in the social sphere.

Maceina believed that this “third way” based on early Christianity would integrate the positive elements of capitalism and communism into a “synthetic” understanding of property. According to him, “Christian views on the property can be expressed in the following formula – *ownership of property is private, usage of property is social* [visuomeninis]. This is a synthetic understanding of property which, if put into practice, would radically change the whole of the present social order, and which at the same time would avoid the mistakes of capitalism and communism.”¹⁴² His vision had a clearly articulated communal focus – this was a synthesis of individualism and collectivism that had to protect the human “person” and simultaneously enable social solidarity. Maceina asserted that the surplus had to be socialized and constantly redistributed among the needy: “*Surplus, by its very nature, belongs to society simply because it is surplus, and hence unnecessary for man.*”¹⁴³ He envisioned an economic order in which the principle of profit, which dominated capitalism, would be replaced by another principle, the principle of necessity, where the surplus would be redistributed to the needy. This would be a coming back to the Christian tradition in economics.

It is important to point out that Maceina did not argue for a completely egalitarian society. He explained that economic inequality “*was rooted in the whole natural order, and it would be utopian to dream of a time of complete equality.*”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, social justice would be achieved when every member of the community would be

¹⁴² Ibid., 158.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 1.

afforded a certain objective level of subsistence.¹⁴⁵ He remained vague on specific details of this new order; however, it was clear that his envisioned social reform, which had to start with moral and spiritual transformation, had to end up with institutional changes in the state. Thus, describing how his proposed principles would work in practice, Maceina delegated the task of redistribution to the state, whose duty would be to regulate property relations. Maceina believed that the state had to ensure that one possessed only as much property as one needed for a comfortable life and utilized it properly.

In response to the rising fears of the communist takeover, the Young Catholics turned their attention to the questions of social welfare. Dielininkaitis for example thought it was necessary to strike blows at communism in the workers' movement, where, in his opinion, "communism was building its strongholds."¹⁴⁶ Concerned about the possibilities of implementing social reform, Maceina too turned to workers' activism. He believed that to win against communism, the Catholics had to win over the workers: "The secularization [*nureliginimas*] of the working class is clear and almost universal. If the Church does not win over the workers in time, it will lose the power which is destined to build the future order of social life. It goes without saying that neither the Church nor God will have any place in this order. That is why the Church today must pay special attention to the working class."¹⁴⁷ Thus, Maceina joined

¹⁴⁵ For Catholic understanding of social reform see Carlo Invernizzi Accetti's discussion on "sufficientarianism" in *What is Christian Democracy? Politics, Religion and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 161-3. For the extensive treatment of Catholic economic thinking during the interwar period as well as the competing understandings of property see James Chappel, "The Thomist Debate over Inequality and Property Rights in Depression-Era Europe," 21-37. *So What's New About Scholasticism? How Neo-Thomism Helped Shape the Twentieth Century*, ed. Rajesh Heynickx and Stéphane Symons (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018).

¹⁴⁶ As quoted in Artūras Svarauskas, "Studentai ateitininkai ir politika 1926–1940 metais" [The Ateitis student members and politics, 1926-1940], *Religija ir visuomenė nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940)*, ed. Arūnas Streikus (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2010), 163.

¹⁴⁷ Antanas Maceina, *Socijalinis teisingumas: Kapitalizmo žlugimas ir naujos santvarkos socialiniai principai* [Social justice: The collapse of capitalism and the social orinciples of new order] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1938), 14.

Dielininkaitis in labor activism, becoming a member of the board of the Catholic Labor Union.

4. 7. The New Humanism of Keliuotis

While Maceina and other intellectuals gathered around the editorial office of *XX Amžius* represented the Catholic impulse to begin a moral and spiritual renewal that aimed at the transformation of social relations and establishment of new social order, this was not the sole response to the experience of crisis among the young Catholic intellectuals. A rather different tendency was expressed by Keliuotis, who in 1937 suggested that the negative tendencies of modernization had to be avoided by rejecting modernity altogether. Around the time when Maceina began his calls for Catholic renewal and social justice, Keliuotis distanced himself from the other Young Catholics, withdrawing from the *XX Amžius* editorial. Later, Keliuotis wrote: “*XX Amžius* does not want to tolerate anyone who wants to be independent and not to be a lackey of its team.”¹⁴⁸ In early 1937, Keliuotis penned his last article for *XX Amžius*. Not soon afterward Keliuotis published a series of articles jointly entitled “The New Humanism,” which indicated his radical departure from the program of the Young Catholics to reconcile religion and modernity. As the chief editor of *Naujoji Romuva*, Keliuotis was an influential intellectual in Kaunas, therefore it is worth briefly looking into these writings.

Reacting to the crisis of the modern world, Keliuotis saw the situation in similar terms as the rest of the Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals. “The modern world is perishing in chaos, in materialism, and various despotisms. It seeks salvation not in spiritual

¹⁴⁸ Juozas Keliuotis, “*XX amžiaus taktika*” [The tactics of *XX Amžius*], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1939, No. 41, 741.

elements but in material ones. It escapes from anarchism by surrendering to the absolute power of the collective and its leader, and it hopes to overcome materialism with new myths – class, state, and race. But this is a solution to the crisis by external means when it can only really be defeated from within.”¹⁴⁹ Modernity, according to him, was drowning in chaos, and de-personalizing tendencies were evident in politics, social life, and art. Modern life, he claimed, was too far removed from nature. Keliuotis was both fascinated by modernity and frightened by the negative consequences it brought. Already in 1935, in his art criticism, Keliuotis argued that authentic art had to be bound with nature; it was necessary to maintain a connection with one’s homeland to create organic *Kultur*: “The human spirit must be freed from the dictatorship of the machine and fashion, it must find itself again and declare its primacy. It cannot remain in bondage to superhuman impulses. It must become free and autonomous, it must live the organic, cosmic life of reality, because only in this way can it protect its life and embody its vocation. Industrialism and machinicism, individualism and abstractionism suffocate man and destroy his creativity; they must be defeated and put in their [proper] place.”¹⁵⁰

Writing in 1937, Keliuotis only strengthened his judgements, claiming that modern man needed to re-establish the relationship with nature. Rejecting every modern ideology, including liberalism, fascism, and communism, he advocated for a certain regeneration, which, he suggested, was impossible without a spiritual revolution that would unleash inner freedom and creativity, strengthening “man itself and his personality.” Only by relying on a spiritual center within, man could conquer the chaos of the external world. Keliuotis called this solution to the “spiritual” crisis the

¹⁴⁹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Naujasis humanizmas” [The new humanism], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 15, 321-3, here at: 321.

¹⁵⁰ Juozas Keliuotis, “Moderniojo meno orientacija” [The direction of modern art], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1935, No. 19, 419-22, here at: 420.

new humanism, envisioning it vaguely connected with Christian spirituality. While speaking about inner freedom and creativity, Keliuotis lacked conceptual clarity, and sometimes it was hard to understand what he was aiming for. It remained clear enough that he envisioned some sort of personalist order, suggesting that “every true civilization had to be a personalist.”¹⁵¹ Therefore, he employed the distinction between the human “person” and the human “individual,” explaining that “[m]an as an individual belongs to the earth, to his family, to matter, but as a personality he rises above the world and depends only on his Supreme Creator.”¹⁵² In these articles, Keliuotis depicted modern urban life and Christianity as antithetical to one another.

Perceiving the modern world as drowning in anarchy, Keliuotis embraced order and hierarchy that had to suppress it: “Every artificiality, every violation of the natural human tendency, threatens new chaos and new distortion. So, we must seek an organic hierarchy, an organic harmony, by which all the natural tendencies of man are satisfied, by which all the positive tendencies of man are caressed and cultivated, [and] by which they are merely organized, harmonized, and integrated into a natural, meaningful, harmonious, unified and constantly improving life.”¹⁵³ Keliuotis suggested that natural harmony, which was undermined by modernization, had to be restored by returning to the “natural” agrarian society. To avoid degeneration, it was necessary to go back to the supposedly more genuine peasant life. After all, he explained, nations are born and grown in the villages:

Nothing builds a person up as positively as the earth: farmers everywhere are the most positive and healthy people; they are rooted in their land, drawing life from it; they are connected to the traditions of their family and their nation, preserving, nurturing and passing them on to new generations; they are the least likely to use artificial

¹⁵¹ Juozas Keliuotis, “Žmogaus asmenybė” [Human personality], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 20, 441-6, here at: 445.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁵³ Juozas Keliuotis, “Naujasis humanizmas” [The new humanism], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 15, 321-3, here at: 323.

means of protection and of destroying new life; they are the natural children of nature, they do not abuse it or hinder it from achieving its goals, and are therefore the best supporters and nurturers of their race, their people; they are the most persistent to abstractions and the least likely to succumb to demagoguery, and are therefore always saving their countries from revolution, from the collective madness, and from all the illusions and myths.¹⁵⁴

While he did not suggest abolishing cities altogether, Keliuotis argued that it was necessary to return many urban populations to villages. With Lithuania being a largely agrarian country without huge urban populations, his suggestions sounded detached from reality. Even the capital city of Kaunas seemed like a marginal provincial town if compared to the major European cities. Despite this, Keliuotis imagined that the negative consequences of modernity, such as artificiality, exploitation, social injustices, fashions, prejudices, and deception would be abolished in the rustic communities. He behaved ambiguously: while speculating about a move to the countryside, Keliuotis continued to think of himself as an urban intellectual and did not have even the slightest thought of moving out of Kaunas himself.

While Keliuotis envisioned a certain leap into the “natural” life of agrarian society, he did not develop his critique of urban modernity and industrialization into a suggestion to reject the West. Moreover, he did not completely break out with his aesthetical views, in his art criticism repeatedly asserting his continuous fascination with certain strands of modern art. Keliuotis for example expressed his fascination with the Italian modernist poet and military commander Gabriele D’Annunzio, whose aestheticization of politics was a major inspiration for Italian Fascism.¹⁵⁵ Keliuotis knew this connection and regarded D’Annunzio as the spiritual leader of the new Italy, who called Italy to move toward “the greatness of the future.” In 1938, Keliuotis commemorated the death of D’Annunzio with an article in *Naujoji Romuva*, where he

¹⁵⁴ Juozas Keliuotis, “Į naują materialinį gyvenimą” [Towards new material life], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 15, 323-327, here at: 325.

¹⁵⁵ George L. Mosse, “Fascism and the French Revolution,” *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2021), 66-8.

presented D'Annunzio as an embodiment of modern man. For Keliuotis, D'Annunzio represented youthfulness and inexorable dynamism that had no limits; he brought life and art together: "His whole life is one great adventure and a march of burning imagination, a daring challenge and a conquest of new lands. D'Annunzio is a romantic legend who has forcefully invaded modern times, shattered them, and made them bloom with lilies of new beauty."¹⁵⁶

Keliuotis's aesthetical preferences never acquired a clear political form, as he lacked interest in political life. When he left the editorial board of *XX Amžius*, he refrained from commentaries on politics, in the pages of *Naujoji Romuva* concentrating on art and literary criticism. In the second half of the 1930s, however, *Naujoji Romuva* became increasingly conservative in choosing its visual content, frequently reproducing pieces that represented neo-classical principles.¹⁵⁷ Keliuotis published his last article from the cycle of "The New Humanism" in September 1937, which had to be continued with further analysis, however, he did not write a follow-up article, abandoning the project altogether. For our purposes, the trajectory of Keliuotis is important because it provides an alternative to that of other Young Catholics, who remained more optimistic about modernity and Christianity's ability to inspire moral and spiritual renewal.

¹⁵⁶ Juozas Keliuotis, "Gabriele D'Annunzio arba Grožis, meilė ir garbė" [Gabriele D'Annunzio or beauty, love and honour], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1938, No. 11, 257-60, here at: 257.

¹⁵⁷ Jolita Mulevičiūtė, "The Programme of the Journal *Naujoji Romuva* and Its Impact upon Lithuanian Art," *Reinterpreting the Past: Traditionalist Artistic Trends in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1920s and 1930s*, ed. Irena Kossowska (Warsaw: Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2010), 231-44, here at: 239.

4. 8. The Living Spirit

By the second half of the 1930s, Šalkauskis stayed away uninvolved in the major controversies in Lithuanian public life. He did not write a single article on the situation in Spain, remaining silent on the issue. In contrast, his colleague and friend Eretas wrote extensively on the Spanish Civil War, after a few years publishing an entire book that consisted of his overviews of the events at the front.¹⁵⁸ Neither did Šalkauskis publicly react to the urges of the Young Catholics to tackle the problem of social justice. When his students sought to start moral and spiritual reform that could inspire broader social changes in society, Šalkauskis remained a bystander, perhaps already contemplating retiring from public life. With his health slowly deteriorating, it seemed that he has given initiative to the younger.¹⁵⁹ By that time, he had already written all his major works and did not publish a single book for the rest of his life. Throughout 1937 Šalkauskis was working on the creation of a Lithuanian philosophical terminology, compiling a glossary of the most important philosophical terms in German, French, and Russian, and searching for their Lithuanian equivalents.¹⁶⁰

His silence did not mean however that Šalkauskis became disinterested in the most urgent questions of the day. By late 1937, he matured a new idea for the spiritual renewal of the whole Catholic society, which led him at the beginning of 1938 to launch a new campaign: “For Catholic Action to be active as an organization, it needs a certain mood, a certain spirit, even a certain climate, so to speak, to animate it and to create the right conditions for its development. A certain breath of the living spirit

¹⁵⁸ Hispanus [Juozas Eretas], *Strategija ties Madridu: Su plunksna per Ispanijos pilietinio karo laukus* [Strategy at Madrid: With the pen across the fields of the Spanish Civil War] (Kaunas: Žaibas, 1939).

¹⁵⁹ The question of health remained important topic in Šalkauskis’s biography written by Eretas, see Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (New York: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960).

¹⁶⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, *Bendroji filosofijos terminija* [Common philosophical terminology] (Kaunas: 1937).

must pass through Catholic society, which should revitalize the strongest individuals, bring them together in one ideological fellowship, and unite them in one enthusiastic ardor.”¹⁶¹ He called his envisioned initiative of renewal a living spirit, urging Catholics to launch a movement of the Living Spirit.

While earlier, for almost two decades, in his pedagogy Šalkauskis focused mainly on the education of a new intellectual elite that would lead the nation, now he sought to unite all Catholics for the pursuit of Christian ideals, despite their ideological differences. In his 1938 public lecture, entitled “The Importance of the Catholic Worldview for the Future of Lithuania,” Šalkauskis asserted once again that only Catholicism could prevent society and nation from moral decay and degeneration, suggesting that a new kind of pedagogy was needed to achieve this aim.¹⁶² Inspired by the examples of new pastoral care from Western Europe, Šalkauskis proposed to start a campaign for the renewal of Christianity and the evangelization of society through a certain inner awakening of the spirit. Many years later, Yla, who in the 1930s taught future Catholic priests about new methods of pastoral care, remembered his teacher’s concern with moral and spiritual reform in Lithuania: “Šalkauskis has been concerned about this for a long time. For example, in the spring of 1937, one of his inquiries to me was surprising. He asked me to lend him a course [materials] in pastoral theology. [...] When he returned the borrowed copy to me after his vacation, he said that he had read with special enthusiasm the chapter on the new Catholic Action in the West. He

¹⁶¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Būkime gyvosios dvasios žmonės!” [Let us be people of the living spirit!], *XX amžius*, June 4, 1938, 1-2, here at: 1.

¹⁶² Stasys Šalkauskis, “Katalikiškosios pasaulėžiūros reikšmė Lietuvos ateičiai” [The importance of Catholic worldview for Lithuania’s future], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938, No. 5, 336-50.

wondered whether we too should look for new methods in our life. He spoke emphatically about the living parish.”¹⁶³

Šalkauskis explained his vision in an article entitled “On the Issue of the Living Spirit,” which very much seemed like a continuation of the line maintained by the Young Catholics. He began the article by diagnosing gap between the Catholic life and the ideals of Christianity:

In recent times, Lithuanian Catholics are more than ever feeling the abnormality of their situation. This is being written about and perhaps more talked about. Of course, there are various reasons for this abnormal situation: both internal, which lie within the actors themselves, and external, which go beyond the limits of Catholic life and action. In most cases, the negative factors can only influence the situation of Catholics to the extent that they find support in the weaknesses of Catholics themselves. Perhaps this will also be the case here in Lithuania, where Catholics are far from standing at the height of their religious ideals.¹⁶⁴

Somewhat disappointed with the lack of activism from the Catholic society, Šalkauskis suggested that ideology and organization were far from being essential for Catholic renewal; instead, he emphasized the spiritual aspect. He called to start the Living Spirit movement, asserting that Christian humanism had to give a new direction to Catholic society, renewing the organizations of the Catholic Action:

The cardinal error of modern civilization was that it sought true humanity in laicism and secularization. But by freeing humanity from its divine element, that civilization pushed the man into bestiality. The Catholic worldview finds true humanity in the Christian ideal, which improves human nature with the divine element. [...] [T]heocentric humanism is the only true conception of humanity. [...] Christian humanism is the best response to the aspirations of the zeitgeist. It is precisely in connection with the achievements of Christian humanism that the authority of Catholics in the modern world is increasingly growing and promises for Catholics significant gains.¹⁶⁵

Šalkauskis’s suggestions that the church must become a living community expressed ecumenical and egalitarian tendencies. The movement of the Living Spirit, he argued,

¹⁶³ As quoted in Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (New York: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 222.

¹⁶⁴ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Gyvosios dvasios reikalu” [On the issue of the living spirit], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938, No. 2, 112-9, here at: 112-3.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

had to be universalist, involving all sections of society, regardless of the political and social views of the people, and thus uniting all Catholic believers. Šalkauskis suggested Christ was the center of life and therefore it had to be the basis for renewal.¹⁶⁶ The movement of the Living Spirit was, as Šalkauskis himself said, his last major undertaking: “So many of my ideas, plans, exercises, systems have remained a voice crying out in the wilderness, that when I raise the question of the movement of the living spirit, I think to myself: well, this will be my last attempt.”¹⁶⁷

Having paid particular attention to conceptualizing the ideological framework for Catholic engagement with the modern world for almost two decades, in early 1938 Šalkauskis tasked the Living Spirit movement to inspire religious enthusiasm in the broader masses: “it is not enough for the Catholic worldview to flourish only among the intellectual workers. It needs to radiate out to the whole of Catholic society and to influence it intellectually, morally, and religiously.”¹⁶⁸ In his articles on this idea, Šalkauskis stressed the importance of the emotive element in religious commitment, asserting that it had to inspire spiritual renewal from within: “*the living spirit is a constant inner spiritual tension directed towards the pursuit of the ideal*”¹⁶⁹ He had a vision of a united Christian community, bound together by an active inner principle.

Throughout 1938, in the official monthly of the Catholic Church *Tiesos Kelias* Šalkauskis repeatedly articulated his call for spiritual renewal that could bring religious energies into Lithuanian society, as he saw it already happening in some

¹⁶⁶ Stasys Yla, “Ateitininkų misija” [The mission of the *Ateitis*] in Stasys Yla, *Tolyn į laiką, gilyn į gelmę: Kun. Stasys Yla raštuose ir atsiminimuose*, ed. Gediminas Mikėlaitis (Vilnius: Aidai, 1997), 269-77.

¹⁶⁷ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Degančios širdys, vienykitės!” [Burning hearts, unite!], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938, No. 6, 419-21, here at: 419.

¹⁶⁸ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Katalikiškosios pasaulėžiūros reikšmė Lietuvos ateičiai” [The importance of Catholic worldview for Lithuania’s future], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938, No. 5, 336-50, here at: 350.

¹⁶⁹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Degančios širdys, vienykitės!” [Burning hearts, unite!] *Tiesos Kelias*, 1938, No. 6, 419-21, here at: 420.

other European countries: “In various countries, there are many new signs of the revival in Catholics of creative initiative, of new thought, of bold ventures, of an activist attitude, of broad perspectives, in a word, of all that can be called in one term as the living spirit.”¹⁷⁰ Committed to the idea of spiritual renewal, Šalkauskis even started working on a study on religious pedagogy, which would be able to attract “a wide variety of people with remarkable pedagogical success.”¹⁷¹ One witness of these efforts to initiate spiritual renewal later explained Šalkauskis’s thinking at the time, suggesting that he was dissatisfied with the existing organizations of Catholic Action, including the Catholic youth movement *Ateitis*: “Although everything from the ideological principles to the ceremonial regulations has been systematically paragraphed, this has by no means yet triggered the spiritual banquet of the *Ateitis*. On the contrary, it was rather beginning to decline, because the bourgeois tendencies of the time also penetrated the members of the *Ateitis*, despite all their adherence to the ideology beautifully formulated by Šalkauskis. Šalkauskis himself dramatically experienced the shattering of his cherished hopes when he experienced that the form did not yet water the spirit.”¹⁷²

Despite proposing the idea, Šalkauskis was vague on how this new movement should look and the concept had no philosophical content. Inviting others to discuss his suggestion, Šalkauskis succeeded in provoking discussions on the topic among the clergy; however, beyond sporadic initiatives, his calls did not grow into visibly increased Catholic activism, let alone the spiritual transformation that Šalkauskis had hoped for. Šalkauskis invited the Young Catholics to join his projected movement, but it seems that they were not particularly impressed. The following diary entry by

¹⁷⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Gyvoji dvasia” [The living spirit], *Tiesos kelias*, 1938, No. 5, 361-3, here at: 361.

¹⁷¹ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Pilnutinio religinio ugdymo pagrindai” [The foundations of integral religious education], *Soter*, 1939, No. 1 (28): 27-56, here at: 56.

¹⁷² Juozas Girnius, *Pranas Dovydaitis* (Chicago: Ateitis, 1975), 483.

Ivinskis from November 4, 1938, was telling of the distance between Šalkauskis and his young colleagues: “The day before yesterday (Wednesday) we were with Šalkauskis, Ambrazevičius, and Eretas at the home of Bishop Būčys (five persons in total) on the matter of the living spirit. I remonstrated with Šalkauskis that I did not believe in such a living spirit. It is an impalpable and obscure thing. Šalkauskis and Bishop Būčys naively talked among themselves about the issues on which I expressed my skeptical opinion. I will probably not participate further in that ‘living spirit.’”¹⁷³ These discussions on living spirit lasted an entire year but had very few practical consequences. Šalkauskis’s close friend, Eretas, reflecting on the Living Spirit movement, later remembered only one particular instance of religious enthusiasm inspired by Šalkauskis’s call for the living spirit: a Catholic youth congress, in which “on a sunny Sunday morning, during the holy mass on Vytautas Hill, a large crowd of young people prayed and sang in chorus, as if the whole oak grove had been transformed into a giant church. Our young people, perhaps for the first time in their lives, felt so deeply the beauty and power of their faith.”¹⁷⁴ The creator of grand plans Šalkauskis once again was unable to achieve a wider support in society. In the second half of 1938 and 1939, as we shall see in the next chapter, concerns with European politics gradually overshadowed Catholic aspiration to renew religious life and accelerate cultural change in the country, relegating his idea of living spirit into irrelevance.

¹⁷³ Zenonas Ivinskis, 4 November 1938, Diary, Fund 29, Box 14, Zenonas Ivinskis Fund, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania.

¹⁷⁴ Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1886-1941* (New York: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 225.

4. 9. Conclusions

Despite recognizing the “European spiritual crisis,” Lithuanian Catholic thinkers did not reject the Western model of modernity that they sought to emulate. Instead, they sought to renew it. Lithuanian Catholic thinkers spoke about modernity using genealogies of European culture, in which the present crisis was traced back to the anthropological turn that gained its pronounced form since the Renaissance. The roots of the present crisis, therefore, were in the metaphysical “error” of Renaissance, when God was displaced from the center of the interactions between men. This “error” led to the rise of materialist and rationalist tendencies, with the modern man losing the sense of the “inner” self, which in turn led to the rise of collectivism in politics that only further denied the primacy of the spiritual. Modernity was characterized by its inner contradictions in the socio-economic sphere, the rise of atheism in modern schools of thought, relativism in morals, and permanent strife among different fractions in politics. For Šalkauskis and his collaborators, the rise of fascism and communism was only the most recent and the most radical outcome of the crisis that permeated the West. Meanwhile, Christianity, according to them, was an organic and unifying factor that could harmoniously incorporate all the positive aspects of modern culture reconciling their contradictions. Consequently, they believed, the crisis could be resolved only by initiating a certain theocentric turn in culture, in which God would become its ultimate orientation.

In response to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the rise of the Popular Front in France, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals grew increasingly concerned about the growing influence of the anti-Christian ideologies of fascism and communism. They realized that making Christianity the dominant factor in contemporary Europe, which

they had pursued since the First World War, had a questionable prospect, and the rise of National Socialism and Soviet Bolshevism had to be responded immediately with a certain spiritual renewal. The Young Catholic intellectuals believed that the Church had to be renewed so it could reclaim its position in public life. This was evident from the case of Maceina, who proposed a project of moral and spiritual renewal, first articulated in his public lecture “The Social Justice of Catholics.” He suggested that the moral and spiritual renewal of society was interlinked with the renewal of the Church. Maceina attributed the conservatism within Lithuanian ecclesiastical authorities to the influence of Neo-Scholasticism and argued that laypeople, like himself, had a responsibility to bring about necessary changes.

Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals sought to save the public dominance of Christianity because they were so invested in the cause of the Lithuanian nation, as the case of Stasys Yla highlights. In his writings on communism, Yla conceptualized communism as a threat to Lithuanian statehood and national culture, envisioning Christianity as the best means against it. Secularization of society, he suggested, would lead to the spread of communism and the eventual overthrow of the Lithuanian government. The sense of crisis did not lead Lithuanian Catholic thinkers to question the national project, although they cautioned against the growing influence of bourgeois capitalist values in Lithuanian society. The Young Catholics, guided by their mentor Šalkauskis, responded to the intensified crisis by embracing moral and spiritual transformation, both within the Church and in the social order. They believed that only a culture grounded in Christian principles could avert crisis, and thus sought to renew the Church and establish a Christian-inspired social order. Maceina, in his writings on social justice, called for a remake of the Catholic intellectual canon, criticizing Neo-Scholastic orthodoxy and highlighting the importance of Patristic theology. He

associated Thomas Aquinas with the rationalization of Christian tradition, which he believed contributed to the rise of capitalism. Maceina's case suggests that the establishment of new social order and the renewal of the Church in the minds of the Young Catholics were interlinked, and they suggested that the crisis could be solved only by achieving both. In their vision, the Church had to be reformed by removing its formalist and legalist structures and embracing a certain spiritual element that Maceina saw as the crenel of authentic Christianity. It was the image of early Christianity that he put as the example for his own vision of socially just order in his 1938 book *Social Justice*.

Reacting to the perceived "European spiritual crisis," Lithuanian Catholic thinkers proposed a project that had to be anti-fascist, anti-communist, and anti-liberal, even if their suggestions differed. While Maceina and other Young Catholic intellectuals aimed to become a new Catholic elite that would lead society toward spiritual renewal, Šalkauskis focused on igniting religious enthusiasm among the masses, shifting his attention from educating a new elite to conceptualizing religious pedagogy for this purpose. Both Maceina and Šalkauskis asserted the importance of the subject and the "inner" religious experience. They also asserted that social transformation had to be initiated through the initiative from below, stressing the importance of Catholic self-mobilization. In contrast, Keliuotis took a different approach, suggesting that spiritual renewal required a rejection of urban modernity and industrialization. He advocated for a societal order based on a hierarchy of values and the primacy of the spiritual. While Keliuotis asserted that a radical break was needed, he did not explicitly articulate his suggestions into clear political proposals. Meanwhile, Maceina and other Young Catholics emphasized the need for social transformation to overcome

the liberal bourgeois order and counteract the destructive consequences of the “anthropological turn” that ultimately gave rise to fascism and communism.

5. European Great Politics and the Disintegration of Philosophy of Culture in Lithuania

By the late 1930s, there were more and more facts that contradicted the narrative that Lithuanian philosophers of culture told about modernity. For two decades, philosophy of culture provided a framework to think about modernity and ways to reconcile religion and culture. Lithuanian Catholic thinkers believed that all the negative aspects of modern period were the outcomes of a metaphysical “error” made by a modern man, who gradually turned away from God. In European cultural history, the Renaissance was the period during which the principle of anthropocentrism, as opposed to the theocentrism of the Middle Ages, took hold in culture. This led to a tendency towards crises in the cultural history of the modern period. The move away from the religious elements that animated culture led Western culture towards exhaustion. In his *Introduction to Philosophy of Culture*, Maceina wrote that “the West is overworked. They are tired. They are exhausted in their organization, logic and technique.”¹ Once the crisis nature of modern culture had been established, it was agreed that European culture was in need of renewal. Thus, the foundations of Lithuanian philosophy of culture included a statement about the ontological significance of culture, while at the same time acknowledging its insufficiency.

The emergence of philosophy of culture in Lithuania in the first decades of the twentieth century signified the engagement of Lithuanian thinkers in the discourse of the crisis of Western culture that was already taking place in other European countries. One must indicate the specificity of philosophy of culture that was practiced in Lithuania – Lithuanian thinkers did not question modern European culture. Instead,

¹ Antanas Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas* [Introduction to philosophy of culture] (Kaunas: V. D. Universiteto Teologijos-Filosofijos Fakulteto leidinys, 1936), 42.

they aimed to develop European culture in a different direction. The ultimate goal of Lithuanian Catholic thinkers was to find the “solution” to this crisis of culture. They had to offer a version of modernity devoid of the destructive impact of modernization. The crisis of Western culture was perceived as a negative phenomenon that had to be avoided in the project of Lithuanian national culture. Thus, the most important goal of Lithuanian thinkers was the development of a positive cultural project – national culture that was both modern and Catholic.

During the interwar period, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers, influenced by the neo-scholastic school, reflected on the question of the essence of culture in their attempts to determine the proper relationship between culture and religion. The most prominent Lithuanian philosopher of culture, Šalkauskis, constantly urged the search for ways to combine religion and culture in a harmonious synthesis. Like other thinkers, he sought to create a national culture that was both modern and Catholic. Christianity was associated with cultural progress and was therefore seen as the cornerstone of both European culture and Lithuanian national project. However, a series of events in 1938-1940 made it increasingly doubtful that the possibility of a harmonious relationship between religion and culture could be achieved. On March 17, 1938, Poland issued an ultimatum to Lithuania demanding the establishment of diplomatic relations, suggesting that anything less than an unequivocal acceptance of all of its terms would result in war. On March 20, 1939, Lithuanian government received another ultimatum, this time from Nazi Germany, demanding that the Klaipėda region be handed over and threatening to take it by force if the ultimatum was not accepted.² These developments as well as the eruption of the Second World War framed the history of Lithuanian philosophy of culture in 1938-1940, and in order to understand

² Alfonsas Eidintas et al., *The History of Lithuania* (Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2015), 211-25.

the concerns of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals during the period, one has to take them into account.

In this chapter I will show that it was the international political situation and its impact on domestic politics that provided the impetus for Catholic thinkers to rethink their attitudes towards the Lithuanian national project. As I argue in this chapter, Šalkauskis, Maceina, Dielininkaitis and other Catholic intellectuals were fully engaged with the political controversies of their time. The rise of expansionist politics in European great politics, posed a challenge to Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals' ambition. They no longer viewed the solution to the "European spiritual crisis" as their most urgent aim. Leaving the project of spiritual and moral renewal, they concentrated on the effort to preserve national culture. In January, 1939, observing to the present situation in international politics, Skrupskelis wrote about the catastrophic events of world politics as the outcome of secularization: "Austria is liquidated, Czechoslovakia is pruned, Spain is being destroyed, the Chinese are bathed in blood, [while] London and Paris are adorned with trenches... Berdyaev was right when he said that we live in a world of madness [...]. De-Christianisation led to inhumanity, and inhumanity to madness;" in contemporary world, he suggested, not culture, but power decided everything: "the ratio of bombs, tanks and bayonets dictates interstate relations."³

The power play between the great European powers presented a challenge to philosophy of culture: it was not clear anymore whether it was possible to reconcile religion and culture. This chapter tells a story of a transformation of Lithuanian Catholicism, which shifted its focus from the earlier attempts to renew Christianity

³ Ignas Skrupskelis, "Tarp jubiliejų ir pavojų" [Between anniversaries and threats], *Židinys*, 1939, No. 1, 3-12, here at: 3.

and conquer the modern world towards conceptualization of new models of collective belonging that were predicated on the centrality of nation in their thinking. The developments of international politics that directly touched on the issues of Lithuanian sovereignty and its territorial integrity formed important background for the history of philosophy of culture in Lithuania and helps to explain the changes that Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals made in their conceptualizations of Lithuanian national culture as well as their thinking about the possibility of reconciling religion and culture.

5. 1. Geopolitics and National Culture

As we may recall from the previous chapter, at the beginning of 1938, Šalkauskis began a public campaign aiming to launch a movement of the Living Spirit, which was to inspire the spiritual rebirth of the whole Catholic society. However, the unexpected Polish ultimatum to Lithuania in March 1938 drastically shifted the focus and sidelined the issue of spiritual revival. Despite this setback, Šalkauskis remained committed to his ideas and continued the campaign throughout the year, however, he increasingly addressed the challenges posed by international politics. Šalkauskis reacted to the shocks of international politics by coming back to the question of Lithuanian national individuality, especially after the Polish ultimatum in 1938 that in the public eye marked the loss of hopes to regain the Vilnius region. Reacting to this event, he decided to address the question of Vilnius, the city that played a key role in Lithuanian national mythology.⁴ As we shall see, in this public intervention Šalkauskis repeated his earlier pronouncements about cultural synthesis as the historical vocation of the Lithuanian nation.

⁴ Dangiras Mačiulis and Darius Staliūnas, *Lithuanian Nationalism and the Vilnius Question 1883–1940* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2015).

In his 1938 essay entitled “Lithuania’s Geopolitical Situation and the Problem of Lithuanian Culture,” Šalkauskis returned to his idea of cultural synthesis, examining how the geopolitical situation of Lithuania impacted its cultural advancement. The publication of this article can be seen as an event that symbolized a wider shift in Lithuanian Catholic thinking that took place gradually over the course of 1938 and 1939, when questions about the future of the national project overshadowed the debate about spiritual and moral renewal. In the last years of interwar period many of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals increasingly focused on the prospects of Lithuanian national project in the new geopolitical realities, which for them signaled the upcoming war, indicating a much wider shift in East Central Europe among Catholic thinkers towards the issues of the preservation of national culture.

Responding to the loss of Vilnius, Šalkauskis asserted that the synthetic impulse of Lithuanian national individuality was calling for the inclusion of Vilnius as an integral part of Lithuania, implying that the present situation was detrimental to the national project: “The separation of Vilnius from the body of Lithuania is such a wound in our national life that destroys our national integrity, prevents the formation of a purposeful economic and geopolitical whole in Lithuania, and transforms our state into an incomplete fragment of the state without a broader perspective and a distinctly expressed synthetic historical tradition.”⁵ In other words, Lithuanian statehood had to be conceptualized with the Vilnius region as its integral part. Returning to the same ideas that he first encountered in the writings of the neo-scholastic philosopher de Munnynck, who taught him in Fribourg, Šalkauskis suggested that Lithuanian national individuality possessed a certain natural inclination towards the pursuit of the equilibrium, which had to be sought both in the state’s domestic and foreign politics.

⁵ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Vilniaus atvadavimas ir tautinio mūšų gyvenimo problemos” [The liberation of Vilnius and the problems of our national life], *Mūsų Vilnius*, 1937, No. 1-2, 6-7.

As far as it concerned foreign policy, Lithuania had to remain neutral between its more powerful neighbors:

Being in a limitrophic [*limitrofiška*] position among the great powers, Lithuania is called to form a buffer state with an international balancing function. A buffer state can best justify this role if it maintains strict neutrality towards its neighbors. The fact that each neighboring state has elements within the buffer state that are akin to its own does not preclude the maintenance of neutrality, but rather constitutes a basic guarantee of it. The various elements of a buffer state can only live in peace if the principle of reciprocity prevails in their actions and behavior. This means that each [cultural and ethnic] element refuses to actively take the side of one of its neighbors in the name of national unity and demands the same from the other elements of the buffer state.⁶

Šalkauskis believed that Lithuania's ethnically diverse population could allow it to maintain equally good relations with all the neighboring countries. There he drew on the neutrality of Switzerland, the example that he saw by his own eyes when he spent most of the First World War studying in Fribourg: "During the Great War, the German part of Switzerland was clearly sympathetic to Germany, the French part of Switzerland to France, and yet neither the former nor the latter demanded that the whole of Switzerland join one or the other of the belligerents, because each Swiss knew that to become entangled in a war on one side would mean the end of a united Switzerland."⁷ Thus, far from seeing its ethnical diversity as a potential source of frictions between different ethnic groups, Šalkauskis maintained that it was the factor that allowed Lithuania to balance between the more powerful neighbors and remain neutral without being dragged into a possible war.

In terms of domestic politics, Šalkauskis believed that the only way to achieve a truly stable national unity in the state was to recognize the cultural differences that existed in society through social and political reforms. In order to achieve this, he suggested,

⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis, "Lietuvos geopolitinė padėtis ir lietuvių kultūros problema" [Lithuania's geopolitical situation and the problem of Lithuanian culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 4, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1995), 455-77, here at: 460-1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 461.

Lithuania had to be federalized, because only federalization would bring necessary unity among its different inhabitants, uniting them around Lithuanian national individuality: “there is nothing left to do but to respect the uniqueness of the expression of all citizens, to respect the cultural [and] spiritual freedom of individual groups, to recognize the principle of multilingualism in the state on the basis of individual districts, and to create, by a loyal cultural policy, the most favorable conditions for the return of the estranged elements to their national strain.”⁸ Šalkauskis believed that the federalization of the state was necessary in order the population of Lithuania, including the ethnic minorities, could become completely loyal to the Lithuanian state and remove the possibility of antagonism in the country. By adopting an appropriate cultural policy, he suggested, Lithuania could overcome tensions within its multilingual and multicultural population. The creation of a national culture that would be open to contributions from other cultures would reduce the possibility of antagonism between different ethnic groups: “the cultural antagonism between Lithuanian-, Polish-, German- and Belarusian-speaking citizens [...] will diminish considerably when it moves in the direction of a broad cultural synthesis because in the latter case Lithuanian national culture will have in itself organic elements which will not be altogether alien neither to Polish-, nor to Belarusian-, nor German-speaking citizens.”⁹

Šalkauskis asserted that the Lithuanian national project must remain diverse in its cultural influences, rejecting the possibility of national exclusivism and one-sided domination of Lithuanians over ethnic minorities. Šalkauskis responded to the Polish ultimatum of 1938 and the subsequent political crisis in Lithuania by reinstating his commitment to cultural universalism and once again suggested cultural synthesis as

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 472.

the way for Lithuanian modernization. In short, his conceptualized Lithuanian individuality was incompatible with national exclusivism. Šalkauskis recognized the value of other ethnic communities that existed in Lithuania – their cultures had to become an integral part of Lithuanian culture. At the same time, Šalkauskis saw other ethnic communities as inherently Lithuanian – he believed that all communities living in Lithuania shared a certain inner communal bond. This stated Lithuanianess of these groups served for Šalkauskis to underscore that his proposed social and political order was not a mechanical blending of incompatible elements but rather a recognition of their supposed commonality. This treatment of ethnic minorities as belonging to the Lithuanian nation served for Šalkauskis as a necessary premise for his vision of social harmony in the state – only the people that were connected by a certain inner link could organically grow into a nation.

While after Poland's ultimatum Šalkauskis called for Lithuanians to project their future state with Vilnius as its capital, his close friend Pakštas quickly found a completely different solution. Counterintuitively, he invited Lithuanians to reconcile with the Poles. Such a solution, he argued, would be the best solution, considering the “vital instinct” of the Lithuanian nation for its own preservation. In his article from November 1938, Pakštas explained that the political situation makes it worthwhile to rethink Lithuania's perspectives on international politics, forgetting old feuds and ideological differences. Perhaps good relations with Poland, he suggested, could help to keep the Lithuanian-speaking enclaves in the Vilnius region intact, preserving them from Polonization. Looking into the prospects of international politics, Pakštas urged to adopt a realist approach in foreign policy, asserting that Lithuania had to establish good relations with both Poland and Nazi Germany and even align its goals in foreign policy with those of these countries:

And now, without forgetting old friendships, the need and the benefits of even more improved relations with Lithuania's immediate neighbors is very clear. Political realism must encourage us to better understand, appreciate and respect the new Germany and to find new, entirely wise means of sincere cooperation with the real groups of people in Klaipėda. Lithuania's contact with German dynamism should become more intense and more in line with the goals which Germany has already achieved, and those that Lithuania is striving for in the near future. Ideological differences need in no way stand in the way of a better agreement between Lithuanians and Germans, which could certainly serve both peace and the national achievements of both nations. The same sentiments must determine our relations with Poland.¹⁰

In other words, Pakštas believed that Lithuania could cooperate with any European nation as long as it did not harm its cultural and economic interests. While earlier, in 1935, Pakštas conceptualized Vilnius as part of the federalized Lithuania, in 1938 he began urging for the acceptance of current borders. This change of mind indicated that the vision of multi-ethnic Lithuania that Šalkauskis defended was hard to reconcile with current geopolitical realities. It seems that this position, which stressed a realist approach to international politics, was gradually adopted by the Young Catholics during the Second World War when some of them took part in the Provisional Government of 1941.

5. 2. National Unity and New Catholic Politicians

The great politics on the European scene pushed Lithuanian oppositional groups to think about the ways in which they could cooperate with each other. In the time of national emergency, this search for common ground and partnership among different political groups was inspired by the fear over the future of the Lithuanian nation. Many, Catholic intellectuals including, doubted about the prospects of Lithuanian nation if a major war on the European scene would break out. Starting with 1938, the

¹⁰ Kazys Pakštas, "Lietuvių lenkų ginčas geros valios šviesoje" [The dispute between Lithuanians and Poles in the light of good will], *XX Amžius*, November 11, 1938, 3.

sense that Lithuania was in the state of emergency led to their consolidation, and young Catholic intellectuals played a central role in this process. Political thinking in different groups began shifting towards the formation of ideological consensus, despite their divergent approaches to religious questions. The perception that Lithuania was in a state of emergency led even the authoritarian regime to change its practices of governing, and eventually coopted some of the members from the opposition to a new government that was formed after receiving the ultimatum from Germany in 1939.

The young Catholic thinkers shared a newfound interest in participating in political life, which marked a departure from their previous stance against party politics. In late 1935 and early 1936, the Young Catholics briefly explored the ideas of new political order, which they presented in their jointly authored manifesto “Towards the Creation of an Organic State,” however, this focus was short-lived. This focus was short-lived as their attention shifted towards concerns about communism and, to a lesser extent, fascism. After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, they became increasingly focused on the need for spiritual and moral renewal, a topic explored in chapter 4 of the dissertation. In 1938, the Young Catholics were clearly dissatisfied with the regime, again focusing on political situation in Lithuania. Ivinskis, for example, noted in his diary that in moments of uncertainty, leaders elsewhere address the people, whereas in Lithuania, the leader remains silent.¹¹ Dielininkaitis similarly pointed out the government’s lack of legitimacy, remarking that it clung to power as

¹¹ Zenonas Ivinskis, 12 November 1938, Diary, Fund 29, Box 14, Zenonas Ivinskis Fund, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania.

firmly as the head of a decaying barnacle, ready to be dislodged by the wind caused by a fleeing rabbit.¹²

By the late 1930s, the rising tensions on the international scene prompted them once again to engage in the debates over political changes in Lithuania. Since 1938, they began advocating for a new kind of politics, one that transcended partisan biases. They called for the setting aside of partisan divisions and envisioned a political order in which different ideological currents could work together. In these discussions, the discourse of national unity played central role in shaping the strategies of Lithuanian political parties, and for the Young Catholics it opened the possibility to engage with other political groups, in this way overcoming the strict political line represented by the former Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party. The discourse of national unity would become one of the key ideological elements that followed the establishment of the Provisional Government in 1941, so it is important to examine how it was used by the Young Catholics.

The discourse of national unity became a central element in the political discussions of 1938. While it had previously been used to legitimize the Smetona regime, the discourse took on a new anti-authoritarian meaning.¹³ Since the coup of 1926, this discourse was used to present the Smetona regime as representing the whole nation. However, in 1938, calls for national unity were employed by the oppositional groups as critiques directed at the regime. The newspaper *XX Amžius*, jointly edited by the Young Catholics, frequently expressed the view that Smetona had hindered the

¹² This statement by Dielininkaitis was recorded by an informant of the State Security Police. As quoted in Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2014), 312-3.

¹³ On the usages of national unity by the National Union party see Leonas Sabaliūnas, *Lithuania in Crisis: Nationalism to Communism, 1934–1940* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1972), 26-30.

formation of genuine national unity by excluding other political groups from the political process. This tendency of the Young Catholics expressed by Skrupskelis, who in one of his essays noted the confusions of terms in Lithuanian politics: “[w]e often do not give words the meaning that the people have given them. We no longer dare to call things by their real names. Sometimes we even deliberately confuse terms, as if the confusion could be useful.”¹⁴ In other words, despite their claims, the National Union party did not truly represent national unity but rather the interests of a small group. Hence, *“it is necessary to return the concepts their true meaning, to give to the nation what belongs to the nation, and to a current what belongs to a current.”*¹⁵

The most important idea the Young Catholics advocated in 1938-1939 was that unity could only be achieved through solidarity, not through coercion. They distanced themselves from statist forms of politics associated with fascism and communism, highlighting the significance of ideological differentiation. While they did not support the parliamentary politics of the 1920s, they emphasized the importance of democratic pluralism and the freedom to choose one’s ideological preferences. They repeatedly asserted that unity was a result of internal inclinations that grew “organically” from within, and it could not be achieved by using “mechanical” means, i.e. National unity, according to the Young Catholics, required respect for the views of all ideological groups committed to the nation. By embracing national unity, they advocated for the replacement of one-party rule with a government representing the entire nation, treating different ideological groups (“worldview communities”) neutrally. Therefore, the discourse of national unity allowed the Young Catholics to advocate for political

¹⁴ Ignas Strupskelis [Ignas Petrikonis], “Kelių belyginant: šūkių ir tikrovė” [Leveling the ways: Challenges and reality], *XX amžius* April 20, 1938, 3.

¹⁵ Ignas Strupskelis [Ignas Petrikonis], “Paradoksoi apie Tautiškaumą: Kam jo trūksta?” [Paradoxes on national-sense: Who is lacking it?], *XX amžius*, July 28, 1938, 3.

changes, while at the same time indicating that they were open to cooperate with other oppositional groups. Šalkauskis also echoed this sentiment, asserting that society should be united yet diverse, and that differences did not mean irreconcilable contradictions. In an article from 1939, he argued that that “lands of liberty,” where the free unity of intelligent citizens prevailed, were more resilient and capable of moral resistance than “lands of silence,” because “the free unity of intelligent citizens is a far greater power than the mechanized unity of subjugated people.”¹⁶

The political shift was exemplified by Dielininkaitis and Skrupskelis, who engaged in discussions with the Agrarian Populist party as part of the Catholic group. Although these parties did not formally exist due to the outlawing of opposition movements, the Polish ultimatum prompted their former leaders to initiate secret meetings. By the end of March 1938, Dielininkaitis and Skrupskelis became involved in discussions about the possibility of forming a joint opposition movement. Due to censorship, the scope of their operations was limited. They could only raise political issues through spoken word in small gatherings.¹⁷ Therefore, we do not know all the participants in these discussions, nor do we know their exact content. However, it was clear that the Catholic group was willing to overcome confessional boundaries and cooperate with the leftist forces. This stance marked a departure from the 1920s, when Christian Democrat ideology emphasized the link between national and religious identities. Skrupskelis’s arguments expressed in *XX Amžius* captured the moral and ideological disposition of the Catholic group: “Catholics will always be the most zealous realizers of common ideals, although they do not intend to give up their specific tasks,

¹⁶ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Pilietinės vienybės besiekiant” [In search for civic unity], *XX amžius*, May 23, 1939, 3-4, here at: 3.

¹⁷ Juozas Ambrazevičius, “Pranas Dielininkaitis visuomeniniame darbe,” [Pranas Dielininkaitis in societal work], 10-20, here at: 15. In Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Mokyklų laisvė ir valstybė* (Šiauliai: Saulės delta, 2000).

especially since by doing so they could only harm the common good. But this does not mean that they would thereby be willing to refuse any compromise or closer cooperation, the terms of which would have to be discussed separately.”¹⁸ In other words, cooperation with other groups did not undermine one’s Catholic commitments. Different ideological currents must be respected as long as their individual goals did not contradict the common welfare. “What is common must unite us all, what is different must complement and enrich the life of the nation’s spirit, its cultural creation. That what erodes the morality of the nation and damages its spirit cannot be incorporated into the common work is self-evident.”¹⁹

In 1938, it seemed that the younger generation was taking the mantle of political Catholicism into their own hands and advocating for a new kind of politics. These Catholic intellectuals distanced themselves from the legacy of the old Christian Democratic Party, which had been a prominent force during the parliamentary period of the 1920s. Looking back, Pakštas described these meetings as an attempt to renew the Catholic political tradition: “Dr. Dielininkaitis, Dr. Skrupskelis and I were considered by them as the junior wing of the same Christian Democrats, more active and stronger, and even more sympathetic. It seemed to me that slowly, without splitting and revolution, the younger current would reach the majority throughout the country, without discarding and without excluding the conservative people.”²⁰ his perspective was evident in their choice of self-identification as “Christian politicians” and “Catholic politicians” rather than explicitly calling themselves Christian

¹⁸ Ignas Skrupskelis [Ignas Petrikonis], “Kelius belyginant: šūkiai ir tikrovė” [Leveling the ways: Challenges and reality], *XX amžius*, April 20, 1938, 3.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Kazys Pakštas to Jonas Grinius and Zenonas Ivinskis, 19 March 1954, Kazys Pakštas, “Kazio Pakšto laišakai Zenonui Ivinskiui” [Letters from Kazys Pakštas to Zenonas Ivinskis], ed. Vygintas Bronius Pšibilskis, *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 12 (2003): 76-87, here at: 80-1.

Democrats.²¹ One acquaintance who engaged in discussions with them about the political situation in Lithuania recalled their conversation years later, stating, “[a]s I recall, they said that the misfortune of the right-wing Lithuanian political currents, probably [having in mind] of the Christian Democratic Party, was that from the very beginning it had been led, [and] in general strongly influenced, by priests, who wanted to pursue the political and cultural life of the country on a narrow confessional basis.”²²

The change in tactics was not limited to the Catholic group; the Agrarian Populists also demonstrated a shift in their approach. This change became evident in the press, as their newspapers expressed positive opinions of each other. The pages of *XX Amžius*, in particular, revealed that by late 1938, the Young Catholics were fully supportive of the idea of a wide oppositional coalition.²³ The discussions between these two groups gradually expanded to include other oppositional parties, with the inclusion of the radical right group known as the Voldemarists.²⁴ Reacting to the European great politics, the members of the Lithuanian oppositional groups, which in the past could not find a common ground, now began working with each other, coming to a shared conception of future for Lithuania, to which the ideas of democracy and consensus were key. This spirit of cooperation continued into the years of the Second World War, culminating in the formation of the Lithuanian Activist Front, a movement that brought together parties ranging from the Social Democrats on the left to the Voldemarists on the radical right. Notably, the Young

²¹ Artūras Svarauskas, “Valstybinė opozicija ir politinė krizė Lietuvoje 1940 m. okupacijos išvakarėse” [The state opposition and the political crisis in Lithuania on the eve of the 1940 Occupation], *Istorija* 90 (2) (2013): 22-35.

²² Julius Būtėnas, *Lietuvos žurnalistai* [Journalists in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Žurnalistika, 1991), 118-9.

²³ Kęstutis Skrupskelis, *Ignas Skrupskelis: Asmenybė ir laikas* [Ignas Skrupskelis: Personality and times] (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2014), 311-20.

²⁴ Gediminas Rudis, “Jungtinis antismetoninės opozicijos sąjūdis 1938-1939 metais” [The united movement of opposition to the Smetona regime, 1938-1939], *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1996 (1997): 182-215.

Catholic Ambrazevičius served as the Prime Minister in the Provisional Government of 1941, exemplifying the lasting legacy of these political opposition's efforts in the last years of the interwar.

By the end of 1938, believing that the government's authority was dwindling, this oppositional alliance harshly criticized the Smetona regime. Taking advantage of the relative autonomy of the Klaipėda region, local autonomy prevented the government from censoring their work, they published critical in a newly founded newspaper *Bendras Žygis (A Joint March)*.²⁵ The result of these deliberations was a jointly prepared manifesto entitled "The Foundations of the Future Order of Lithuania," which was published in December 1938. The manifesto clearly articulated the alliance's objectives, which extended beyond merely replacing the existing government to encompass a comprehensive transformation of the state itself. Their aim was to establish a democratic order that included a functioning parliament and ensured equal treatment for all ideological factions. The authors emphasized that national unity could only be achieved by respecting the diverse ideological groupings present within Lithuanian society: "It must create conditions of life such that all citizens, whatever their position or opinions, feel an equal need and an equal moral obligation to be concerned for the security of the state and to defend its independence."²⁶ The new Lithuanian government would have to include individuals from diverse political groups, with no single party granted superiority: "we declare that a government responsible to the people must be guided in all its work not by the principles and interests of one party and of any one political union, but by the welfare

²⁵ Alfonsas Eidintas et al., *The History of Lithuania* (Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2015), 213.

²⁶ "Lietuvos ateities santvarkos pagrindai" [The foundations of the future order of Lithuania], *Lietuvos politinės minties antologija: Lietuvos politinė mintis, 1918-1940*, ed. Justinas Dementavičius et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2012), 577-81, here at: 577.

of all the citizens of the state. The order of the state must be based on legitimacy, tolerance, and social justice.”²⁷

Despite the publication of the manifesto and the negotiations for a transfer of power, the Smetona regime swiftly suppressed these oppositional activities. Following the manifesto’s release, a wave of searches, arrests, and interrogations was unleashed. As a key negotiator, Dielininkaitis faced punishment in the form of a six-month “exile” from Kaunas to his hometown of Juškai. The Catholic labor union’s newspaper, *Darbininkas*, provided a glimpse into his life during this period, possibly based on Dielininkaitis’s own account: “Dr. Dielininkaitis has brought books, reads, collects material for articles, and sometimes when the host is away, he takes over for him and does some urgent farm work. Our villages do not have electricity yet, so the doctor works with a kerosene lamp and adapts to the provincial way of life by going to bed early.”²⁸ During this period, Dielininkaitis was thinking about the need to reform political life and the most appropriate direction for these reforms. He subsequently published a series of articles on the concept of democracy, arguing that democracy was best equipped to meet the needs of modern society. Further, we will explore his vision of new political order, which would allow us to understand better the political leanings of the Young Catholics.

5. 3. Dielininkaitis and the Renewal of Political Life

Dielininkaitis, who in 1938 was organizing political opposition that consisted of different ideological groups, embraced democracy as the future political form in

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Dr. Dielininkaitis,” *Darbininkas*, January 13, 1939, 1.

Europe. He advocated for Lithuania to follow the democratic examples set by Western European countries. In the contemporary world, he asserted, “*democracy is neither obsolete nor defeated*.”²⁹ Moreover, he claimed, democracy was the political expression of Christian truths. In his search for a new political order, Dielininkaitis proposed that the old democracies needed to be further democratized by involving as many sections of society as possible in the governance of the state. Dielininkaitis sensed that modern life, with its social fragmentation and political polarization, became too complex for the modern state to handle it. New kinds of institutions had to be invented to tackle modern social and political discontents. While he had previously considered the corporatist social organization as a potential solution, by early 1939, Dielininkaitis was convinced that a comprehensive political reform was necessary. He asserted that the Lithuanian state should be remodeled based on the functioning models of modern democracy observed in Western European countries. Specifically, he pointed to the strength of Belgium, where parliamentary democracy thrived through intra-party alliances and the cultural autonomy of “worldview” groups, which were ensured by the pillarization of society.

At the beginning of 1939, Dielininkaitis emerged as a Catholic advocate of democratic reform that would establish a representative government. His views were evident from a series of articles entitled “The Fluctuations of Political Systems” that he penned while being in “exile,” when after the unsuccessful attempt to organize a coup against the authoritarian government Dielininkaitis, as one of the leaders behind this cooperation between different oppositional political groups, was sent away from Kaunas to his home village in the Lithuanian countryside. Thus, in these 1939 articles Dielininkaitis that political life was in crisis throughout Europe; the time had come for

²⁹ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Kai kurios naujos tendencijos demokratijoje” [Some new tendencies in democracy], *XX amžius*, February 8, 1939, 3.

reforms. According to Dielininkaitis, “the new state has not yet been found, it is still being sought.”³⁰ It was necessary, he contended to renew democracy according to the requirements of the times.

After gaining experience in political participation and joint work with other ideological groups, Dielininkaitis advocated the restoration of democracy in Lithuania. He asserted that there were no essential differences between democratic ideals and the key truths of Christianity:

The basic idea of democracy is respect for the human person, the recognition that the human person must be seen by others as an end and not as a means. As [French legal theorist] Le Fur rightly points out, this is the transposition of the Christian understanding of the human person into the political sphere. Of course, man can only fulfill his purpose, [and] his goals, by living in and with the help of society. But from the point of view of democratic doctrine, society must reckon with the inestimable worth of the human person and enable the human personality to develop and flourish, and not turn a man into a mere tool of collective goals, whether the collective is the state, the nation or a social class.³¹

Thus, democracy was the realization of Christian principles in the political sphere. Then discussing the renewal of democracy, Dielininkaitis used personalist language to stress that a key element of democracy was “the recognition that the *human being must be regarded by others as an end and not as a means.*”³²

Asserting that democracy was the political expression of Christian truths, Dielininkaitis stressed the importance of democracy for the future political life of Europe. In today’s world, he claimed, “*democracy is neither obsolete nor defeated.*”³³ The rise of authoritarian and even totalitarian tendencies in European political life did

³⁰ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Politinių santvarkų svyravimai,” [The fluctuations of political orders], *XX amžius*, January 23, 1939, 3.

³¹ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Kai kurios naujos tendencijos demokratijoje” [Some new tendencies in democracy], *XX amžius*, February 8, 1939, 3.

³² Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Politinių santvarkų svyravimai” [The fluctuations of political orders], *XX amžius*, January 23, 1939, 3.

³³ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Kai kurios naujos tendencijos demokratijoje” [Some new tendencies in democracy], *XX amžius*, February 8, 1939, 3.

not mean the end of democracy, Dielininkaitis argued; on the contrary, “huge regions and the majority of the most cultured small states are still governed on democratic grounds and are proud not only of their national institutions that also of their deeply humane.”³⁴ However, he did not simply propose to go back to the old democracy of the 1920s but to reform it. Dielininkaitis was convinced that only the reform of democracy could create the conditions for further progress in society. In his search for a new political order, Dielininkaitis proposed that the old democracies needed to be further democratized by involving as many sections of society as possible in the governance of the state. Dielininkaitis argued that “in addition to individuals, the state also contains not only families but also numerous confessional, cultural, social, economic, territorial, and other groupings. To a considerable extent, it is only thanks to them that the individual becomes what he is.”³⁵ For this reason, he argued, democracy must involve in political life not only individuals but also the other social groupings, thus adapting the state to the life of society: “in this way, modern democracy orientates the state towards its *organic structure*.”³⁶

Dielininkaitis was interested in constitutional reform, which would ensure equality against the law. Reflecting on the cooperation with other ideological groups, Dielininkaitis argued that the state must ensure the protection of the freedoms of every ideological group. “A healthy understanding of the universal freedom [*bendroji laisvė*] for all and the universal human and civil rights for all [*bendrosios žmoniškosios bei pilietinės teisės visiems*] requires not only the pursuit of the freedom and rights of one’s particular group and its members but also the struggle for equal freedoms, rights, and duties for all, without excluding even one’s ideological

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

opponents.”³⁷ Referring to the example of nineteenth-century Belgium, where Catholic and liberal politicians reached an agreement and managed to create an independent Belgian state and even to incorporate the provisions of tolerance into the country’s constitution, Dielininkaitis hoped that by forming a similar alliance these goals could be achieved in Lithuania. Demonstrating his openness to working together with other ideological groups, Dielininkaitis even quoted Louis de Potter, a nineteenth-century Belgian liberal politician, who claimed that “to assist one’s adversaries, and especially one’s adversaries, in the recovery and preservation of one’s rights is to labor for the triumph of the common liberty and one’s liberty.”³⁸ Dielininkaitis stressed that national unity can only be achieved through the preservation of ideological pluralism. In his view, cooperation between different political groups was possible “when the different ideological political groups understand the need to abandon exclusivist aims, [and] the desire to pressurize those who think differently when they resolve to respect those who believe differently and to give them equal opportunities of manifestation in their own country.”³⁹

Dielininkaitis believed that the crisis of modernity could be solved by certain constitutional reforms. Different ideological groupings had to unite to establish an order, which would ensure respect for the human person as well as the quality of different social and ideological groupings. In his visions of social and political order, with the stressed centrality of corporations in harmonizing private and public interest and the importance of the legal framework to the functioning of the political and economic system, Dielininkaitis resembled and in a way pre-dated the ordo-liberalism of the post-war period. Just like post-war ordo-liberals, he sought to conceptualize an

³⁷ Pranas Dielininkaitis, “Susitarimo ir bendradarbiavimo kelio” [On the way of agreement and cooperation], *Lietuvos žinios*, June 17, 1939, 4.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

order that through various disciplining mechanisms would prevent civil and political freedom from the pathologies of democracy and market.⁴⁰ Similarly, Pakštas called for a disciplined democracy, suggesting that “disciplined democracy avoids plain disorder [*paprasto palaidumo*]. It combines freedom with strict order and legality. [...] National dynamism [*nacionalinis dinamizmas*] denounces the servility of the citizens, their unnecessary humiliation before the government, and rejects the deification of its leaders, making them neither idols nor gods, but wishing to retain them as the carriers and creators of its ideas.”⁴¹

Overall, Dielininkaitis’s writings from early 1939 indicated a wider change in the political views of the Young Catholics, as now they took a much more favorable view of a strong executive government than ever before, while simultaneously suggesting that Lithuania had to avoid the examples of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, or the Soviet Union. At the same time, in his writings, Dielininkaitis did not address the broader international political situation and it remained unclear how Lithuanians could escape the tribulations of political modernity. Moreover, even if Dielininkaitis embraced democracy and pluralism, he did not touch on the question of ethnic minorities in Lithuania, something that became of particular importance once the Second World War started.

Eventually, the period of Dielininkaitis’s “exile,” to which, as we may remember, he was sent after the unsuccessful attempt of the united opposition to replace the current government, was shortened and he came back to Kaunas after less than two months, in mid-February 1939, soon finding a completely new political constellation. As a

⁴⁰ On post-war ordo-liberalism see: Kenneth Dyson, *Conservative Liberalism, Ordoliberalism, and the State: Disciplining Democracy and the Market* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁴¹ Kazys Pakštas, “Lietuviškojo dinamizmo gairės” [Outlines of Lithuanian dynamism], *XX amžius*, February 21, 1939, 3.

consequence of the German ultimatum in March 1939, which led to Lithuania's loss of the Klaipėda region, the cabinet of ministers was forced to resign. Meanwhile, the editors of *XX Amžius* once again called for political reforms:

We shall be independent. We shall work, we shall sacrifice ourselves, and shall not be daunted by any barriers. Prone to work, with a sense of intense devotion, [and] the love of independence, we continue in new confines of our state until death. But we must without delay review all the blunders in our foreign and domestic policies, lest new blows come our way, We have already reiterated thousands of times how to manage our domestic affairs. There is only one road to the future - to come to terms [with the parties of opposition] and rally all, all!⁴²

With the loss of the Klaipėda region, voices calling for the creation of a representative government were louder than ever before. At the end of March, a new cabinet was formed, which was presented as a “government of joint work” (*vieningo darbo vyriausybė*) with four ministers coming from the opposition groups. *XX Amžius* greeted the change, with hopes of wider changes in government's policies suggesting that

the administration is determined nonetheless to ascribe to it a new [...] content. Namely, the affairs of the state are conceived in this declaration in a wider and deeper sense [than before]. The state is set free from any single group. Not one of them may claim monopolistic rights to speak in the name of the state or the nation. [...] Being above [political] parties, [the new administration] “will not side with any particular group, will not yield to the influence of any single trend, but will rather seek to assemble the creative forces of the entire nation.”⁴³

The editors of the daily seemed to be on board with the changes, believing that it would finally establish representative government, same could be said about the Agrarian Populists and Social Democrats, which also embraced the new government.⁴⁴

⁴² As quoted in Leonas Sabaliūnas, *Lithuanian in Crisis: Nationalism to Communism, 1939-1940* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1972), 114.

⁴³ As quoted in *ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

With the establishment of the new government, the representatives of the Catholic group and the Agrarian Populists, both of the groups that were principal actors in organizing the united opposition, came to power, even if political parties remained officially outlawed and the leaders of the authoritarian government stressed individual expertise rather than party lines in the new government.⁴⁵ Even if Dielininkaitis was not included in the new government, he was among the participants in the meetings between the three parties on its formation, becoming a supporter of the new government.⁴⁶ In one of his public speeches, Dielininkaitis explained the need for a small nation to work together: “the present moment the world is going through can be compared to the fall of the ancient Roman Empire or the Great French Revolution. The great nations are arming themselves, while the small ones, to preserve their sovereignty, are awakening in a civic, national way, and are united in preparing to repel every step of the invader.”⁴⁷ Not only him, but other Young Catholics too greeted the new government as a genuine attempt to “consolidate” the nation. In 1940, Skrupskelis wrote about the change: “A new atmosphere of trust was created between the government and the public at large. The government itself declared the need to treat everyone equally and to rely on the whole of society, on all currents, and not on any one group. This perspective also opened up new prospects for cultural and social life.”⁴⁸ During the Second World War, then the Provision Government was formed in the summer of 1941, for a brief moment of time Dielininkaitis joined it becoming a Minister of Labor. The foundation for the Provisional Government was already laid in

⁴⁵ Alfonsas Eidintas et al., *The History of Lithuania* (Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2015), 217.

⁴⁶ Juozas Ambrazevičius, “Pranas Dielininkaitis visuomeniniame darbe” [Pranas Dielininkaitis in societal work], 10-20, here at: 16. In Pranas Dielininkaitis, *Mokyklos laisvė ir valstybė: Sovietų, prancūzų, belgų ir olandų mokyklų sistemos – sintetinio spendimo paieškos* (Šiauliai: Saulės delta, 2000).

⁴⁷ Dielininkaitis speech was retold by a reporter, see Gudžiūnas, “Telšių visuomenė su vieningo darbo vyriausybė. Įspūdingas visuomenės susirinkimas Telšiuose” [Telšiai society with a united labour government. Impressive public meeting in Telšiai], *Lietuvos žinios*, May 3, 1939, 10.

⁴⁸ Ignas Skrupskelis, “Audringų išgyvenimų metai” [A year of turbulent experiences], *Židinys*, 1940, No. 1, 3-9, here at: 4.

the last year before the Second World War when all the major political groups, previously excluded from political life by the Smetona regime, strove for national unity.

5. 4. Maceina and the Reformulation of Cultural Synthesis

Šalkauskis's closest collaborator, Maceina stayed away from the discussions among the oppositional groups, in which Dielininkaitis and Skrupskelis played an important role. Instead, Maceina concentrated on his writing. At the time only thirty years old, Maceina was a *Privatdocent* at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, lecturing courses on research methodology, philosophy of culture, and the theories of pedagogy. Even though the international political situation in Europe was becoming more and more complicated and back in Lithuania the relations between the authoritarian regime and his Faculty were strained, this did not prevent Maceina from being extremely productive.⁴⁹ After publishing his *Social Justice* in early 1938, which we discussed in Chapter 4, Maceina was primarily preoccupied with studying the history of pedagogy. A year later, in 1939, he published a major book based on his lectures entitled *The History of Pedagogy (Pedagogikos istorija)*, in which he explored the philosophical concepts of pedagogy from ancient times to the Renaissance.⁵⁰ In addition, Maceina was working on the Lithuanian translation of the French Catholic essayist Ernest Hello's book *The Human* (orig. *L'Homme*, 1872), which was particularly liked by Šalkauskis in his youth.⁵¹ Alongside all other projects, starting

⁴⁹ For the relationship between the authoritarian regime and the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, see Juozas Eretas, *Stasys Šalkauskis, 1986-1941* (New York: Ateitininkų federacija, 1960), 171-8.

⁵⁰ Antanas Maceina, *Pedagogikos istorija* [The history of pedagogy] (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Teologijos-filosofijos fakultetas, 1939).

⁵¹ For Maceina's translation see Ernest Hello, *Žmogus: Gyvenimas. Mokslas, Menas* [Human: Life, science, art] (Kaunas: Žiniija, 1939).

with 1939 Maceina undertook the task of scrutinizing his philosophical commitments, striving to re-evaluate Šalkauskis's proposed cultural synthesis. As we shall see, Maceina's writings of the late 1930s reveal his existential angst, which is linked to the uncertain future of the Lithuanian national project, and to the question of why Christianity has failed to respond adequately to the challenges of political modernity.

For our purposes, it is important to note the destabilizing effect on Lithuanian public life caused by the Nazi groups in the Klaipėda region during the period of Nazi Germany's expansion starting in 1938. By the start of the Second World War, the Lithuanian government had little support from the local population in the Klaipėda region, with both the German ethnic minority as well as many Lithuanian-speaking natives who did not identify themselves as Lithuanians sympathizing with Nazi Germany.⁵² In early 1939, Skrupskelis described the situation in the Klaipėda region: "Demonstrations, youthful bravura with bloody victims on our side. [...] The demands of the Germans of the Klaipėda region grow day by day. [Ernst] Neumann [e.g., the leader of the local Nazi movement] stands at the forefront of the whole German movement. Again, demonstrations and countless incidents. Sudetic slogans, Sudetic uniforms, paramilitary German formations and a few unambiguous gestures across the [river] Nemunas [towards Germany]."⁵³ One year later, in 1940, reflecting on the recent loss of the Klaipėda region, Skrupskelis wrote that "the turbulent year [of 1939] was clearly foreshadowed for us by the *Klaipėda affairs*. From the very beginning of the year, more and more measures slipped from our hands, [and] more and more the legal forms of life in the region were being stretched, in which some of the local German leaders who had turned to Germany were not willing to fit in any longer.

⁵² Alfonsas Eidintas et al., *The History of Lithuania* (Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2015), 216.

⁵³ Ignas Skrupskelis, "Tarp jubiliejų ir pavojų" [Between anniversaries and threats], *Židinys*, 1939, No. 1, 3-12, here at: 4-5.

Their speeches, their unequivocal declarations, were stretching the atmosphere more and more, in which peaceful work was no longer possible.”⁵⁴ One is even tempted to believe that the experience with the Klaipėda region impacted Lithuanian intellectuals’ attitudes toward other ethnic groups. In any case, this was the context in which Maceina reconsidered his views on Šalkauskis’s teachings, as we shall see, concluding that his teacher made mistake in his conceptualization of the Lithuanian national vocation.

To understand why Maceina saw the need to rethink Šalkauskis’s conceptualization of Lithuanian national vocation, one must examine his changing perception of European culture. By 1939, Maceina had grown pessimistic about the upcoming future, convinced that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were threats to civilizational progress. Under these conditions, he questioned whether religion and culture could be brought together into a harmonious unity, as Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture suggested. Maceina articulated these doubts clearly in his review of Gonzague de Reynold’s book *The Tragedy of Europe* (1934), which was translated into Lithuanian in 1938. In this work, this Swiss Catholic thinker argued that Europe was at risk of experiencing a cultural regress if modern man did not recognize the primacy of the spiritual, and that only Catholicism could prevent Europe from cultural demise. Reviewing this book in the summer of 1939, Maceina indicated that a comprehensive re-Christianization of Europe was no longer possible, and that Christians lost the battle with fascism and communism. He diagnosed Christianity’s failure to inspire the “theocentric turn” envisioned by many Catholic thinkers, including de Reynold. With the looming threats of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, Maceina concluded that

⁵⁴ Ignas Skrupskelis, “Audringų išgyvenimų metai” [A year of turbulent experiences], *Židinys*, 1940, No. 1, 3-9, here at: 3-4.

Europe would inevitably relapse to barbarianism. Maceina encapsulated his pessimism in a lengthy passage that is worth quoting in a whole:

It follows that a path back for humanity is possible. It is especially possible in Europe because the struggle against Christianity today seems not only undiminished but growing. The struggle is being organized today, not only against Christianity in particular but also against religion in general. In the meantime, it must be remembered that the foundations of European culture are essentially religious and Christian. Therefore, the fight against Christianity is in fact a fight against the foundations of European culture. By destroying and undermining everything that is Christian, European culture is being destroyed. Let us not be naïve and think that such a step would be too bold. The younger generations in Germany and Russia are proud of their barbarism, and the richness [*gėrybės*] of the old culture means nothing to them. They will destroy them without any remorse. From the plains of Russia and the forests of Germany comes a new wave of barbarians, not to admire the existing civilization, but to despise and destroy it. The “philosophy of forest” — Waldphilosophie — is beginning to sweep through the new generations of the West and the East today. A kind of epidemic of spiritual madness is spreading to ever wider circles. Therefore, an outright [*atviras*], deliberate turning away from culture, its destruction and subversion, is very possible today. All that is needed is for the instincts of the masses to be relaxed by some event. Therefore, although in theory we know that a return to the spiritual center would be the salvation of Europe, in practice we do not see such a return and we do not know the means of awakening the masses, especially the new generations, for the return to the spiritual center. We do not know the means to awaken in the heart of modern man the longing for the lost God. We only see that this empty space reserved for God has been taken over by faith in the power of matter or vitality [*tikėjimas medžiagos arba gyvybės galybe*]. These people do not feel the power of the spirit. How to arouse [*pajaudinti*] them in this case we do not know. Perhaps it is the weakness of our methods, of our means, perhaps it is blindness on the way to destruction, it is difficult to say. One thing is certain, Europe is indeed tragic.⁵⁵

The difference between de Reynold’s articulated belief in the power of Christianity to transform modern culture and Maceina’s pessimism about the future of Western civilization, and more importantly his gloomy recognition of Christianity’s defeat, could not be more evident. Maceina recognized that Christianity had failed to inspire a religious revival in Europe, concluding that European culture would be swept by the spiritual madness that he attributed to Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. According to Maceina, both Bolshevism and Nazism not only negated religion but also undermined the civilizational ideals of Europe.

⁵⁵ Antanas Maceina, “Tragiškoji Europa (Gonzague de Reynold knygos lietuviško vertimo proga)” [Review], *Tiesos Kelias*, 1939, No. 7-8, 558–69.

Maceina's reflections indicated that not only European culture was facing the major political turmoil, but also that Šalkauskis's philosophy was in crisis. For two decades Lithuanian Catholic thinkers tasked themselves to make religion and modern culture compatible, but by 1939, it became evident that this project was not realizable. As we have seen in chapter 1, the idea of the reconciliation of culture and religion was first formulated in the philosophical-theological writings of Aleksandras Dambruskas in the latter half of the 1900s, and later became the normative ideal in Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture. Throughout the interwar period, Lithuanian Catholic thinkers focused on the prospect of integrating culture and religion while positioning Catholicism as the foundation of both national and European modernity. By the late 1930s, Šalkauskis and his collaborators were tackling both political challenge of preserving Lithuania's independence and the intellectual problem – at stake was the legacy of philosophy of culture itself. Maceina's assertion that Europe will face a cultural regress indicated that the way Lithuanian thinkers talked about European culture could no longer accommodate the new political realities. It became increasingly evident that Christianity, which they associated with cultural advancement, was incapable of inspiring the "theocentric turn" of European culture and to sustain national individuality. Thus, the task and the promise of Šalkauskis's philosophy were left unfulfilled, leaving the question of what to do next open.

The realization that Catholics failed to inspire religious renewal coincided with Maceina's reinterpretation of the tasks of Lithuanian national vocation. A pretext for Maceina to reexamine Šalkauskis's construction of Lithuanian national individuality was given by a publication of an essay entitled "The Problem of Cultural Diversity" by the German philosopher Anton Hilckman, the Lithuanian translation of which appeared in the Catholic *Židinys* in October 1938. In this essay, which was likely

translated by Maceina himself, Hilckman, building on the ideas formulated by the Polish philosopher Feliks Koneczny, argued that there were no universal laws governing the development of culture. The implication was that linear advancement was unattainable, all the cultures were profoundly different. According to Hilckman, the only law in history was struggle between cultures: “Cultures fight each other. One is trying to displace the other. To understand the competition and struggle between cultures is to hold the key to world history.”⁵⁶

Although Hilckman’s analysis primarily focused on the interaction between larger civilizational units rather than national cultures, it spoke directly to the Lithuanian readership: “*There is not and cannot be a synthesis of cultures*. The only thing that is possible, and history is full of such examples, is the mechanical mixing of two or more cultures. But the consequence of such mixing is chaos, [and] the collapse of a culture [...]”⁵⁷ Hilckman emphasized that a synthesis of different cultures was neither possible nor desirable. The only feasible form of synthesis, according to him, was the synthesis of elements within the same culture. Such a view had significant implications for Šalkauskis’s envisioned Lithuanian national vocation, and Maceina underscored this point in his writings: “In the light of Hilckmann’s views, the problem of our national culture emerges in all its severity. Indeed, if cultural synthesis is not possible, if attempts to create such a synthesis lead only to the mixing of cultures, which means chaos and the collapse of culture, then Prof. Šalkauskis’s conception

⁵⁶ Antanas Hilckmannas [Anton Hilckman], “Kultūrų įvairumo problema” [The problem of cultural diversity], *Židinys*, 1938, No. 10, 409-20, here at: 418.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 419.

becomes not only unreal[istic], but even dangerous in some respects because instead of a true synthesis, it would result in a cultural decline.”⁵⁸

Maceina articulated his views on Lithuanian national vocation in a series of articles entitled “The Cultural Synthesis and Lithuanian Culture,” published monthly from April to December 1939, in which he problematized Šalkauskis’s concept of cultural synthesis. Maceina drew inspiration from the representatives of the Austrian School in cultural anthropology and ethnology, notably the Catholic anthropologist and priest Wilhelm Schmidt. Schmidt’s work on “pygmies” challenged the Darwinian cultural evolutionism, which suggested a linear progression of human culture.⁵⁹ In his study, Maceina extensively referred to Schmidt’s work as well as to *Anthropos*, the anthropological journal that Schmidt founded. Of particular interest to Maceina was the theory of culture circles (*Kulturkreislehre*), which proposed a multi-linear vision of cultural evolution. According to it, the traits of modern cultures could be tracked back to a limited number of primeval cultural complexes. By studying the “primeval culture” (*pirminė kultūra*), Maceina believed, one can get a better understanding of the present: “In fact, whoever wants to philosophize about the cultural process must start from the beginning of that process. [...] Meanwhile, it is precisely in this primeval culture that the lines of the cultural process are particularly clear, because of the great uncomplicatedness of this culture.”⁶⁰ Maceina used these principles derived from ethnological studies “pygmies” to grasp the specificities of national individuality, tracing back the national culture to its *völkisch* prehistory.

⁵⁸ Antanas Maceina, “Kultūros sintezė ir lietuviškoji kultūra” [Cultural synthesis and Lithuanian culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991), 399.

⁵⁹ For excellent take on *Kulturkreislehre* and anthropology in Austria with attention to its conservative political implications see Suzanne Marchand, “Priests among the Pygmies: Wilhelm Schmidt and the Counter-Reformation in Austrian Ethnology,” *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*, ed. H. Glenn Penny, Matti Bunzl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 283-316.

⁶⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Universalinės kultūros idėja” [The idea of universal culture], *Židinys*, 1940, No. 1, 105-8, here at: 106.

The theory of culture circles offered Maceina a framework to emphasize the significance of stable elements in Lithuanian national individuality. He concluded that the true mission of the Lithuanian nation was to synthesize the cultural elements that were already present in their national individuality, instead of appropriating elements from other national cultures, as Šalkauskis taught. Maceina explained that “*this synthesis is not the combination of the elements of the East and the West, but of the elements of our individuality.*”⁶¹ In his conceptualization, cultural synthesis balanced different elements of national culture into an organic unity. Maceina did not completely abandon the concept of cultural synthesis used by his teacher. However, he gave it a different meaning, reaching conclusions that contradicted the pedagogical orientation of Šalkauskis’s vision.⁶² He proposed a new understanding of cultural synthesis where foreign cultures could serve as a catalyst for change in the national culture, but they should not be the primary source from which elements are directly appropriated into the national culture. An important implication of this shift in Maceina’s perspective was the negative perception of adopting foreign cultural achievements.

By 1939, Maceina spoke of cultural synthesis in different terms than Šalkauskis. The vision of Lithuanian national individuality that was proposed by Maceina was a result of the break with temporal assumptions that Šalkauskis’s idea of cultural synthesis rested on. Maceina concluded that Šalkauskis’s project became unrealistic under the conditions of permanent strife that permeated European politics. This disillusionment with Šalkauskis’s ideas was at least partly conditioned by Maceina’s disappointment with Catholic efforts to initiate a moral and spiritual renewal. He believed that

⁶¹ Antanas Maceina, “Kultūros sintezė ir lietuviškoji kultūra” [Cultural synthesis and Lithuanian culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991), 431.

⁶² Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the focus of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 230-44.

Lithuanians had to focus on the better understanding and preservation of their national individuality. One practical conclusion that he made from this theory was that the properly arranged Lithuanian state and public life had to be understood as the “objectivization” of Lithuanian national individuality.

Maceina’s embracement of one’s own national culture as the source of progress was a way to stabilize Lithuanian national identity in a world dominated by force. Christianity did not bring harmony into relations between different nations and therefore could not be counted anymore as the foundation for national progress. Maceina was clear that Lithuanians had to impose their culture in the “objective” reality, rejecting the mixing of national cultures as a dangerous idea: *“The unity of the objective sphere is a necessary condition for culture to flourish and develop. The domain of objective culture cannot be plural, diverse, [or] mixed [dauginga, įvairi, mišri]. It cannot have forms that come from different subjective sources.”*⁶³ In this respect, Maceina’s conceptualization of national synthesis was in direct opposition to Šalkauskis’s understanding of it. This reformulation of Šalkauskis’s construction of Lithuanian national individuality by his pupil and philosophical heir indicated that under the geopolitical situation of the late 1930s Šalkauskis’s envisioned cultural synthesis lost the appeal as a normative ideal even among his closest students.

At the same time, Maceina did not reject Šalkauskis’s claim that national culture aimed to achieve universal value, nor did he reject the idea of humanity. Later, arguing against the radical nationalists who rejected Šalkauskis’s cultural universalism, Maceina suggested that a work of a high cultural value must unite humanity and nationality: “If therefore, the individual wants his cultural endeavors to

⁶³ Antanas Maceina, “Kultūros sintezė ir lietuviškoji kultūra” [Cultural synthesis and Lithuanian culture], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 1, ed. Antanas Rybelis (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991), 409.

be meaningful, he can neither retreat from his humanity and concern himself only with the national nor from his nationality and concern himself only with the human. A retreat from humanity is at the same time a retreat from the eternal ideas and problems which are relevant to all men and all times. A retreat from nationality is a retreat from the source of original forms.”⁶⁴ Even after redefining the concept of cultural synthesis, Maceina remained committed to the idea that every nation aspired to create a universality important culture, suggesting that this was also the aim of Lithuanian culture.

5. 5. The Nation, the State, and the Human “Person”

To understand the political thinking of the Young Catholics in 1939 and 1940, one must look further into Maceina’s interventions, as they indicate the tensions between the conceptualizations of the national community and Catholic commitment to the primacy of the human “person.” The case of Maceina was important because of his simultaneous advocacy for the primacy of the human “person” and the embracement of exclusion, limiting personhood to those who belonged to the Lithuanian nation. Instead of embracing human rights and shared human dignity, he emphasized the importance of the Lithuanian nation to survive the calamities of the war.

Maceina’s right-wing turn and his increased exclusivism became particularly pronounced in the autumn of 1939. At that time, following the Soviet-Lithuanian Mutual Assistance Treaty, a significant part of the Vilnius region together with the city, which had recently been taken over by the Soviets from Poland, was transferred

⁶⁴ Antanas Maceina, “Universalinės kultūros idėja” [The idea of universal culture], *Židinys*, 1940, No. 1, 105-8, here at: 107.

to Lithuania. The Lithuanian authorities initiated an aggressive campaign to Lithuanianize the city and its surrounding areas, causing friction among different ethnic groups.⁶⁵ In parallel to this, the Lithuanian Catholic Church attempted to integrate the Vilnius archdiocese, which had previously been under the guidance of Polish hierarchs; however, were met with open hostility both by the local Polish communities and clergy, resulting in continuous tensions between the Polish and Lithuanian faithful.⁶⁶ Therefore, the prospect of establishing a harmonious relationship between culture and religion, the goal stated by Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture, have never seemed as remote as in the period following the annexation of the Vilnius region by Lithuania. For our purposes, it is important to have a close look into how Maceina and the other Young Catholics dealt with tensions between different national communities. This will shed light on their understanding of the human "person" and its relationship with the national community.

Maceina's reformulation of Lithuanian national individuality and its mission in a series of articles jointly entitled "The Cultural Synthesis and Lithuanian Culture," about which we talked in the previous section, indicated a right-wing shift in his political views. Reading the signs of the times, Maceina predicted the end of the bourgeois society with its liberal political institutions that at that moment looked to him, and many others, as an already outdated nineteenth-century model of political organization, which was externally imposed, rather than growing from an internal

⁶⁵ Violeta Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War* (London: Routledge, 2013), 31-2; Dangiras Mačiulis and Darius Staliūnas, *Lithuanian Nationalism and the Vilnius Question 1883–1940* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2015), chapt. 5.

⁶⁶ Ingo W. Schröder and Vita Petrušauskaitė, "Pluralism of Traditions in a Catholic Majority Society: Catholic Hegemony vis-à-vis Nationalism and Ethnic Experience," *Etniškumo studijos* 2 (2013): 69-81, here at: 75. For the relationship between Catholic Lithuanians and Poles in Vilnius during the war years see Regina Laukaitytė, "Vilniaus arkivyskupijos integravimas į Lietuvos Bažnyčios gyvenimą 1942-1944 m." [Integration of the Archdiocese of Vilnius into the life of the Lithuanian Church, 1942-1944], *Bažnyčios istorijos studijos*, vol 1, ed. Arūnas Streikus, (Vilnius: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 2007), 43-61.

bond shared between the people. As he implied, the *Rechtsstaat* had to be replaced by the *Kulturstaat*. In March 1939, shortly after Dielininkaitis published his essays on the renewal of democracy and just before Lithuania received the ultimatum from Germany, Maceina articulated his vision in the essay “The State and the Nation,” which, inspired by anthropologists from the Austrian School, rested on a juxtaposition of *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. “The old state, based on the principle of society,” Maceina wrote, “was external [*išviršinis dalykas*] to the nation. It organized people as individuals, as separate groups, but it did not organize the *nation*. The old state was not a *nation-state* because it could accommodate several nations. The national principle was not placed on the foundations of the old state. Whereas the new state grows essentially out of the nation. It is no longer [imposed] to the nation from above, but the unfolding and manifestation of the depths of the nation.”⁶⁷ It implied that a state based on the selfish individualism of bourgeois society, will be replaced by an “organic” formation founded on the inner link, the “national spirit,” that united the people. According to Maceina, the primary goal of this new state would be the preservation of national culture.

In a way, Maceina’s vision of the new state mirrored his earlier assertion of totalist Christianity, which we discussed earlier, but now he applied the idea of totalism to the nation, which was a secular entity. From the assertion that the state was an “objectivation” of the nation, which he philosophically justified in a series of essays entitled “Cultural Synthesis and Lithuanian Culture,” Maceina concluded that the state had to be ethnically homogeneous, or, in his own words, “total in the *national* sense.” Every area of public life was to be impregnated with the national spirit and become an expression of Lithuanian national individuality. Maceina asserted that “the new

⁶⁷ Antanas Maceina, “Tauta ir valstybė” [The nation and the state], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1939, No. 11, 227-30, here at: 228.

national state reflects the character of the nation, its structure, its inclinations, and will. If the nation objectifies itself in the state, it objectifies itself in its entirety. Therefore, the form of the new nation-state, its institutions, [and] its laws grow out of the spirit of the people.”⁶⁸ The principle of the nation required, he was clear about that, the assimilation of ethnic minorities or relocation of them into their states. In the new state, he explained, citizen (*piliētis*) will be replaced with compatriot (*tautietis*): “The sign of a compatriot is no longer a passport, but the *national individuality*.”⁶⁹ This was an ethnically exclusivist vision of the state, which, as we shall see, was aligned with his understanding of the human “person.”

In his vision of the state, Maceina embraced a unitary *Volk*, bound together by its shared culture. This was a state that was simultaneously both anti-fascist, anti-communist, and illiberal. He envisioned that the primacy of culture, which he embraced, would bring unity into political life and every significant political disagreement would disappear. Notably, Maceina sought to find “that which binds us,” as one of his essays from this period was entitled – principles beyond politics that could become a common ground for both the left and the right in the service of the nation. At the same time, he explicitly dissociated his vision of the state from that of contemporary Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union, suggesting that the Lithuanian state would not impose one particular ideology on everyone and would respect the primacy of the human “person.”⁷⁰ However, the line between these examples of statist coercive unity and his envisioned ideal unity of Lithuania was a delicate one. Maceina suggested that political differences had to be overcome, if not abolished at all. Facing the threat from both fascism and communism, Maceina asserted that politics had to be

⁶⁸ Ibid., 229.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Tai, kas mus jungia” [That which binds us], *Lietuvos žinios*, June 17, 1939, 37.

suspended in the name of the national culture: “in the national state, political tasks fade in front of cultural objectives.”⁷¹ In the new state there was no place for politics, viewed as the sphere of fractional interests and coercive means; therefore, “the current refusal to politicking on domestic issues,” which he observed in Lithuanian political life in 1938 and 1939, “is a significant thing.”⁷²

Affirming the unity of the people, Maceina believed that the state should remain neutral concerning the worldviews that existed in society. In his overlooked essay entitled “The State and Worldview,” published in three parts in July 1939, Maceina argued against the state adopting a specific ideology (“worldview”), because that would unavoidably lead to coercion. This conception was central to his political views in the post-war period, crucially forming the conceptual basis of the political vision articulated in the manifesto “Towards the Creation of Integral Democracy” (1954), of which Maceina was one of the main co-authors. Therefore, a look into these Maceina’s writings also uncover the origins of his post-war political thinking, which until now have never been properly noted by the historians. For the young Maceina, the ability to choose one’s worldview was central to what constituted the person as a free human being, and having a worldview implied the freedom for choosing one. He claimed that “*worldview is a product of the thinking, conscience, and self-determination [apsisprendimo] of the person,*” therefore “[o]ne is free to leave every worldview if one’s worldview changes. This is a right recognized and protected by the cultured mankind. *Only a barbarian can refuse [someone the right] to leave a worldview collective.*”⁷³ Departing from the conception of the human “person” as free

⁷¹ Antanas Maceina, “Tauta ir valstybė” [The nation and the state], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1939, No. 11, 227-30, here at: 229.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Antanas Maceina, “Valstybė ir pasaulėžiūra (I)” [The state and worldview], *XX amžius*, July 20, 1939, 3.

to decide on his or her worldview, Maceina developed a normative theory of the state as a neutral institution with respect to its citizens' adopted worldviews.

The freedom to decide for oneself constituted a central principle of what Maceina called a "worldview collective" (*pasaulėžiūrinis kolektyvas*), that is, a group of people that share a certain worldview, which he opposed to a "non-worldview collective" (*nepasaulėžiūrinis kolektyvas*) that was the state. He drew a comparison between the Church and the state, highlighting that belonging to the Church was a result of individual choice. Maceina stated that the Church was a community of individuals connected by a deeply personal relationship, originating from and centered around the person of Jesus Christ. He argued that the Church, as a collective, comprised individuals who embraced its views and practices based on their own free decisions. In contrast, Maceina viewed the state as distinct from other collective associations due to its capacity for coercion. Unlike the Church, he argued, the state was not a voluntary association, because it had the power to enforce compliance and limit personal freedom. Maceina further contended that the state, being capable of imposing a particular worldview through coercion, should not have its own worldview. It was exactly because of the state's ability to impose a worldview through coercion that it ought not to have a worldview of its own. The state's reliance on coercion rather than persuasion undermined its ability to inspire individuals to freely choose an ideology ("worldview"), and every attempt to do so resulted in a perverted relationship between the state and the human "person." Therefore, Maceina concluded, the state should refrain from having a specific worldview.

The idea of the neutral state rested on a moral argument, which emphasized the emphasis on personal freedom, which reflected Lithuanian Catholics' experiences of

living in the Russian empire, and more recently, under the Smetona regime as well as on the observations on how totalist regimes across Europe operated. When the state sought to impose a worldview on its people, Maceina argued, it only led to disagreements between different groups in society; thus, only a “worldview neutrality” could achieve real unity in the state. “It must be remembered that *the struggle for worldviews is tougher and harsher than the struggle for economic or social interests.*”⁷⁴ By introducing a monopoly of one ideology, the state only encourages infighting: “The state that has a worldview turns into a struggle of ideologies, a struggle that is fierce and persistent. A state that has a worldview can never achieve unity. And the more strongly a worldview will be pronounced in the state, the more divided it will be. You can silence people by the sword, but you cannot convince them by the sword.”⁷⁵ As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the same view was held by other Catholic intellectuals – they all maintained that the neutrality of the state was a necessary condition for the unity of the people. Therefore, the conception of the “non-worldview” state was emphatically anti-statist, and the difference was evident from Maceina’s opposition to the cases of statist domination Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy.

Maceina asserted that the examples of Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy showed that the state’s monopoly over ideology led to the persecution of other worldviews and, above all, to the denial of human freedom. “*This intolerance of other worldviews, or their constant suppression, leads to the disorientation of man and the degradation of his conscience.*”⁷⁶ The constraint of man’s freedom to freely choose one’s worldview, Maceina claimed, led to depersonalization and transformation of

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Antanas Maceina, “Valstybė ir pasaulėžiūra (2)” [The state and worldview], *XX amžius*, July 21, 1939, 3.

free personalities into a mass. According to him, the existence of such states was the consequence of the present-day spiritual crisis:

If, as has been said, we are today facing worldview states, it is only because there has been a change within the human being himself. Man has refused to fight for certain elements of his personality, and so he is naturally inclined to replace these elements with others. [...] Today it has been observed that nothing frightens contemporary man more than the freedom to make a decision. [...] The man of our day is afraid of this inner freedom, afraid of his responsibility, and therefore seeks ways of separating himself from it. Keeping one's job, [and] one's salary is more important to our man than keeping one's freedom. This may be because these inner convictions are shallow, not lived through [*neišgyventi*], [and] more psychological than metaphysical. Such superficial beliefs are easy to change, [and] easy to discard.⁷⁷

By implication, these states represented the very opposite of human freedom; consequently, the fight against such states was the fight for freedom. Maceina even suggested that “[t]he struggle against the worldview state means the struggle for the recognition of the value of the person for all human beings.”⁷⁸

Despite the embracement of freedom in the name of the human “person,” Maceina’s suggestions for the Lithuanian state were marked by a clearly articulated cultural nationalism that aimed to suppress the culture of ethnic minorities. Looking for ways to navigate the present turbulences of history, Maceina believed that the Lithuanian nation could survive only by asserting Lithuanian cultural dominance in public life. “We need to hurry up because just as states used to compete on prestige and power, nations are now beginning to compete on the strength of their individuality and their culture. We cannot lose this race because that would mean the demise of our existence. It is therefore the task of all of us to make our state total in the *national* sense, to extend the national principle in culture, to intensify the development of the nation, to purify it of foreign impurities [*apsivalyti nuo svetimtautiškų priemaišų*], in a

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Antanas Maceina, “Valstybė ir pasaulėžiūra (3)” [The state and worldview], *XX amžius*, July 22, 1939, 5.

word, *to make our state Lithuanian*.”⁷⁹ Only this kind of state, Maceina impied, could prevent the Lithuanian nation from external threats.

It is telling that after Lithuania gained Vilnius together with its surrounding region as part of the Mutual Assistance Treaty with the Soviet Union in October 1939, Maceina and other young Catholic intellectuals were enthusiastic about its Lithuanization, calling to eliminate all the elements of Polish culture from public life there. In the public lecture that he gave to the Catholic teachers’ union in December 1939, Maceina explained that the Polish-speaking inhabitants of Vilnius, which constituted a sizeable population in the city, in reality, were Polonized Lithuanians. “The soul of Vilnius,” he contended, “is Lithuanian.”⁸⁰ The inhabitants of Vilnius needed to be reminded of their Lithuanian individuality through the Lithuanization of public life, while

Polish civilization in the Vilnius region must be destroyed as soon as possible. This civilization is to blame for the loss of national consciousness in the Vilnius region [*Vilniaus kraštas buvo nutautintas*]. Its elimination from life is therefore a vital interest of the Vilnius region. [...] It is necessary to liberate Vilnius from the Polish nightmare which comes to it from the Polish environment, from the Polish language, Polish art, Polish literature, [and] Polish schools. [...] Therefore, *any toleration of Polish institutions in the domains of society, science, art, or religion is a crime against the Lithuanization of the Vilnius region*. These institutions have created a layer that separates the inhabitant of Vilnius from his nation.⁸¹

In his lecture, Maceina suggested that Polish civilization was harming the Lithuanian spirit and suppressing Lithuanian consciousness, therefore its influence must be eradicated from the Vilnius region. In parallel to this, he argued for a positive ethnopedagogical project that had to reawaken the national individuality in those people from the Vilnius region, who, according to him, have lost their national consciousness. The Vilnius region had to be “organically” integrated into Lithuanian civilization, and

⁷⁹ Antanas Maceina, “Tauta ir valstybė” [The nation and the state], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1939, No. 11, 227-30, here at: 229.

⁸⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Tautinis auklėjimas nutautintoje Vilniaus aplinkoje” [National education in the de-nationalized Vilnius environment], *Lietuvos mokykla*, 1940, No. 1, 3-15, here at: 10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

the introduction of Lithuanian as the primary language in public life, he suggested, was one of the main priorities. “A man who is a Lithuanian in his depths, when he encounters the riches of Lithuanian culture, will instinctively feel that they are his own, that they contain something close to him, that they evoke in him some distant, obscure, but strong memories.”⁸²

Amidst the backdrop of the war, other young Catholic intellectuals supported similar ideas to those of Maceina. The cession of Vilnius to Lithuania did spark a wave of enthusiasm as the public mobilized for the Lithuanization of Vilnius. Keliuotis, who in the second half of the 1930s drifted away from the Young Catholics, even called to start a new creative phase in Lithuanian culture life, during which all the mistakes made in the interwar period in the nation’s cultural development would be corrected.⁸³ In reality, however, the situation was much worse than first thought: there was a shortage of food in the city, rising inflation, and the influx of refugees from Poland fleeing from the war. The newspaper *XX Amžius*, edited jointly by the Young Catholics, maintained a line according to which the state had to focus primarily on helping Lithuanians, clearly delineating boundaries between “us” and “them.”⁸⁴ One writer for example suggested that “Vilnius Lithuanians are working hard to help their government handle things – but they want to see a radical handling of the local people and the newcomers. The sooner and more suddenly an operation is performed on a sick body, the more successful and happier it is. It cannot be denied that the Vilnius organism is infected. We need a brave surgeon and good nurses because Vilnius wants

⁸² Ibid., 10.

⁸³ Juozas Keliuotis, “Į naująjį dinamizmą” [Towards the new dynamism], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1940, No. 24-26, 441-3.

⁸⁴ Artūras Svarauskas, *Krikščioniškoji demokratija nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1918-1940): Politinė galia ir jos ribos* [Christian Democracy in independent Lithuania, 1918-1940: Political power and its limits] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2014), 190-7.

to live.”⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Ambrazevičius asserted that only a quarter of the inhabitants in the Vilnius region were autochthonous, while others were brought there by the purposeful policy of the Polish government. These newcomers, he suggested, should be brought back to their homelands, leaving Vilnius for Lithuanians and the autochthonous: “We cannot and should not care for non-Lithuanian citizens in the same way as our own. On the contrary, *we must protect* our own, Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians, *the autochthonous inhabitants of the Vilnius region, from alien invasion*. [...] That huddled people [*tasai suplūdęs svietas*], those non-Lithuanian citizens is the source of the misfits, [and] the indomitable [*išsišokėlių, nenuoramų versmė*]. They should be returned to their home countries or homelands. It is time to take care of that.”⁸⁶

In their essays from 1939 and 1940, the Young Catholics proposed a vision of a national community that acknowledged ideological pluralism but was markedly exclusionist when it came to national minorities. They sought to create conditions in which the Lithuanian nation could survive in a world that was permeated with nationalist tensions and political conflicts. By rejecting the possibility of harmonious relations between different ethnic groups and stressing the need for national unity, the state that these Young Catholics envisioned in 1939 differed substantially from their earlier statements put forward in the 1936 manifesto “Towards the Creation of an Organic State.” Unlike Maceina’s proposals in “The State and the Nation,” which we explored earlier, the 1936 manifesto envisioned an “organic state” as a form of pillarization of society based on the ideas of cultural autonomy (both in ethnic as well as ideological terms) and communal corporatism (understood as the enhancement of

⁸⁵ Kazimieras Umbraziūnas, “Vilniaus lietuvių gyvenimas ir tvarkymosi darbas” [The life of Vilnius Lithuanians and the work of cleaning up], *XX amžius*, November 11, 1939, 6.

⁸⁶ Servus [Juožas Ambrazevičius], “Arba, arba...” [Either, or...], *XX Amžius*, November 10, 1939, 10.

initiative from below). Meanwhile, in 1939, Maceina and his Catholic peers tended to support the ethnically homogeneous state that would serve exclusively the ethnically Lithuanian population.⁸⁷ In the earlier years, the Young Catholics were concerned with limiting the power of the state towards social groups, however, in 1939, Maceina suggested a new direction for the state, proposing a pedagogical project with a pronounced biopolitical bent with natality and nation's purity as one of its central concerns. In his vision, the state would take on an active role in the education of the people according to the requirements of Lithuanian national individuality: "It takes into its own hands not only education and upbringing, understood in the narrow sense, but also the physical life of the nation and its health care, the increase of its members in the families, its protection against mixing with foreign elements, [and] the management of its emigration and immigration. For this reason, certain provisions prohibiting interracial marriages, requiring physical culture, [and] educational supervision and control are necessary and sensible. These matters [up until now] were left too much to the discretion of the individual in the old state."⁸⁸

By the time when he published "The Nation and the State," Maceina greatly differed from his teacher Šalkauskis concerning how national individuality had to be manifested in national life. This difference reflected the conflicting conclusions that

⁸⁷ A different interpretation was proposed by Justinas Dementavičius, who emphasized continuity between the views that Maceina held in 1939 and the earlier manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State," and, consequently, their affinity with Šalkauskis's thought. According to Dementavičius, in the 1939 essay "The State and the Nation" Maceina represented a "Catholic organic political conception," even if "some of the theses of the mentioned article, where political practice is concerned, are quite radical from the contemporary perspective." This interpretation implies that in 1939 Maceina remained close to Šalkauskis, who opposed exclusivist nationalism. However, it must be pointed out that Dementavičius attempted to reconstruct an ideal type of Christian Democratic view on state and therefore was less sensitive to the particularities of historical context and changes in Maceina's views on the feasibility of cultural synthesis in the Lithuanian national project, see Justinas Dementavičius, *Tarp ūkininko ir piliečio: modernėjančios Lietuvos politinės minties istorija* [Between *homo oeconomicus* and *zoon politicon*: The History of modern Lithuanian political thought] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2015), 149-53.

⁸⁸ Antanas Maceina, "Tauta ir valstybė" [The nation and the state], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1939, No. 11, 227-30, here at: 229.

they made in their cultural-philosophical reflections on the idea of cultural synthesis and its place in the Lithuanian national project. One may remember that the belief that the Vilnius region was intrinsically connected with the Lithuanian nation was shared by both Maceina and Šalkauskis. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Šalkauskis asserted that Lithuanian national individuality, which was particularly prone to cultural synthesis, required the Vilnius region, mixed in its ethnic composition, to be an integral part of Lithuania. In his political writings, Šalkauskis proposed a vision of cultural federalism, in which each ethnic group would be treated on equal terms. Whereas Maceina believed that it would not be possible to preserve Lithuanian national individuality if Lithuanians would seek the kind of cultural synthesis that Šalkauskis envisioned. In his cultural-philosophical reflections, Maceina asserted that the Lithuanian national project cannot achieve harmony with cultural elements of other national cultures.

The vision of the ethnically homogeneous yet politically pluralist state puts into a new light the personalist commitments of the Young Catholics. In June 1939, in his essay that was addressed to the representatives of the Agrarian Populist camp, Maceina invoked the importance of the principle of personhood. There he asserted his belief that *“the state was subjected to the human personality.”*⁸⁹ In another place, he explained: “External freedom requires internal freedom, and internal freedom requires a strong sense of oneself as a personality.”⁹⁰ This commitment to respecting human personhood remained a feature that separated Maceina’s envisioned state from the one advocated by fascist political thinkers. However, in the autumn of 1939, when it came to addressing questions related to national culture, Maceina refrained from applying

⁸⁹ Antanas Maceina, “Tai, kas mus jungia” [That which binds us], *Lietuvos žinios*, June 17, 1939, 37.

⁹⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Masės atbudimas” [The awakening of the masses], *Židinys*, 1939, No. 8-9, 160-73, here at: 171.

this principle of personhood to the members of other ethnic communities. In his thinking, shared personhood, and unity between different peoples that it implied, was not extended to the people of other ethnicities. In other words, on the eve of the Second World War, the young Lithuanian philosopher prioritized Lithuanian national individuality over respect for the human personality. When dealing with the questions of national culture, rather than opposing the outbursts of extreme nationalism by constructing arguments based on shared personhood, Maceina silenced the personalist element of this thinking, in this way making his personalism complicit with the elimination of other national cultures from public life and, by implication, with exclusivist nationalism. Thus, Maceina's solution to the challenges of political modernity was the embracement of exclusion. Even so, Maceina, just like other Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals, avoided the straightforward outbursts of anti-Semitism that were present in Catholic pronouncements in the other national contexts of East Central Europe.⁹¹ The anti-Semitic attitudes of Lithuanian Catholics were much more pronounced in the following years, especially starting with the German-occupation of the Lithuanian territories in 1941, however, they were still not visible in their public interventions in 1939 and early 1940, before Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union.

The breakout of the Second World War was perceived as a time of existential threats, leading the Young Catholics to reconsider their commitments. At the moment, the most important task, as Skrupskelis explained, was “*to strengthen our independent state by all means, to protect it from the storms of the world and to bring it back to the*

⁹¹ Piotr H. Kosicki, “Masters in Their Own Home or Defenders of the Human Person?” *Modern Intellectual History* 14 (1) (2017): 99-130; Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 170-92.

new morning of peace.”⁹² In February 1940, in his article dedicated to the anniversary of Lithuanian independence, Maceina described the present as a time in which all beliefs were challenged: “We are living in a time when the human spirit, seeing the collapse of external forms, spontaneously pushes itself deeper and asks questions that are not normally asked in everyday existence.”⁹³ He urged Lithuanians to fight for the survival of their state. By now, he believed that not religion, but the state was a necessary element for the nation’s cultural advancement. Facing the Second World War and the danger that it posed to the national community, Maceina asserted the value of a strong nation-state as the most effective means for the Lithuanians to preserve their national culture. Maceina’s conclusions were clear: no nation should follow one another; on the contrary, each national community had to strive for the preservation of its national individuality. This could be achieved through the imposition of clear boundaries between compatriots and foreigners.

5. 6. The Social Christianity of Povilas Jakas

While Maceina decided to reformulate the central ideas of Šalkauskis’s philosophy, another former student of Šalkauskis, the young priest Povilas Jakas (1908–1968), proposed a version of militant Christianity, which attacked some of the key assumptions of Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture. In many ways, Jakas’s biography was parallel to that of Maceina: born in the same year they both enrolled in Catholic seminary intending to become priests; the difference was the latter withdrew from the seminary, while the former graduated from it. As a student of Kaunas theological

⁹² Ignas Skrupskelis, “Audringų išgyvenimų metai” [A year of turbulent experiences], *Židinys*, 1940, No. 1, 3-9, here at: 9.

⁹³ Antanas Maceina, “Nepriklausomybės prasmė” [The meaning of the independence], *XX amžius*, February 10, 1940, 3.

seminary, Jakas was simultaneously enrolled at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of the University of Kaunas, receiving similar training to the rest of the Catholic intellectuals of his generation; however, instead of pursuing a doctoral degree and traveling abroad, as many of the leading Catholic intellectuals of this generation did, in 1936, he was ordained into the priesthood, soon afterward receiving an appointment to serve as vicar in the Kaunas Cathedral.⁹⁴ Although Jakas did not belong to the circle of the Young Catholics, by the late 1930s he emerged as a prolific writer and *Kulturkritiker*, writing several books on the spiritual state of contemporary Lithuania: *I Am Looking for a Human Being* (*Ieškau žmogaus*, 1938), *The Tragedy of Christianity* (*Krikščionybės tragizmas*, 1938), *Social Christianity* (*Socialinė krikščionybė*, 1939), *Human Being among Human Beings* (*Žmogus tarp žmonių*, 1940).⁹⁵ Having inclinations of a moralist, Jakas lacked the sophistication found in the writings of the major Lithuanian Catholic thinkers; however, the simplicity of his formulations was also his strength, making him accessible outside the academic circles.

From 1938 onwards, Jakas became known for his devastating criticism of the Church, repeatedly pointing out the discrepancy between the Evangelical message and Christianity's historical forms. A reoccurring theme of his writings was a requirement for a certain transformation of society according to the guidance of Christian teachings, which he interpreted primarily as a call for social solidarity among the people. In his 1938 article entitled "What Catholicism Did Not Give to Lithuania?"

⁹⁴ For Jakas's biographical details see Ramūnas Labanauskas, "Naujojo humanizmo pranašas: Kun. Povilas Jako pasaulėžiūros bruožai" [A prophet of the new humanism: The features of Fr. Povilas Jakas's worldview] *XXI Amžius*, accessed on July 7, 2022, https://www.xxiamzius.lt/numeriai/2006/11/08/atmi_02.html.

⁹⁵ Povilas Jakas, *Ieškau žmogaus* [I am looking for a human being] (Kaunas: Švyturys, 1938); Povilas Jakas, *Krikščionybės tragizmas* [The tragedy of Christianity] (Kaunas: Akiratis, 1938); Povilas Jakas, *Socialinė krikščionybė* [Social Christianity] (Kaunas: Akiratis, 1939); Povilas Jakas, *Žmogus tarp žmonių, arba naujasis humanizmas* [Human being among human beings, or the new humanism] (Kaunas: Švyturys, 1940).

Jakas turned back to the history of Lithuania, criticizing the Catholic Church for the fact that the christening of medieval Lithuania did not inspire a genuine religious renewal that could have led to social reform. On the contrary, he noted, it coincided with the worsening living conditions for the peasantry, as the Christianization of the country was followed by the rise of serfdom. He asked, “[i]f socialism makes life socialist, communism makes it communist, and masonry makes it masonic, why Christianity, while absorbing and conducting everything, did not make life Christian?”⁹⁶

For Jakas, who judged “real Catholicism” with its institutions in the “light of the Gospel,” the reality of Christianity in Lithuania was hardly comparable with the high normative ideals of Christ’s teachings. In the follow-up book *The Tragedy of Christianity*, in which he developed his critique of the Church further and responded to the criticisms by other priests leveled at him, Jakas added that by its faulty actions the ecclesiastical authorities often discredited the Christian idea, thus contributing to the tendencies of secularization.⁹⁷ It was hard not to read these pronouncements as a critique of the Church, and following the publication of his “What Catholicism Did Not Give to Lithuania?” Jakas was suspended by the ecclesiastical authorities from his priestly duties, leading him to find temporary employment as a clerk in a governmental office – a position that was the opposite of the Young Catholics’ ideal of spiritual freedom, which we touched on in Chapter 2. In short, in many ways, Jakas was an outsider to the more established forms of Catholicism.

The difficulties Jakas experienced did not stop him from spreading his ideas, serving only to strengthen his negative opinion about the institutional Church, which he saw

⁹⁶ Povilas Jakas, “Ko katalikybe nedavė Lietuvai?” [What Catholicism did not give to Lithuania?], *Židinys*, 1938, No. 7, 69.

⁹⁷ Povilas Jakas, *Krikščionybės tragizmas* [The tragedy of Christianity] (Kaunas: Jakas, 1938), 89.

as a conservative force. While propagating asceticism in his personal life, Jakas also demanded it from others, repeatedly portraying the Church as an obstacle to social reform. This was the impression left by his studies at the seminary, which, like Maceina, Jakas was not satisfied with. For him, even Catholic social teaching that was developed starting with the string of encyclicals by Leo XIII in the late nineteenth century was an expression of the conservatism that permeated the ecclesiastical life: “It was only when, then confused by the program of socialism the proletariat turned away from Christianity and began to threaten it, that the leaders [of the Church] acted; [only then] the leadership spoke out. In reality, however, the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* is owed more to Karl Marx than to Leo XIII.”⁹⁸ Controlled by conservative officials who feared social radicalism, he reasoned, the Church was primarily interested in the preservation of its own status, disregarding new ideas and reacting against a genuine effort for social reform. Unsurprisingly, some of Jakas’s books from the late 1930s were published without *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* markings, standard for the publications by Catholic priests, suggesting that the clerical hierarchy perceived his ideas as contradicting the official teachings of the Church.

Jakas’s remoteness from the officially accepted Catholicism was particularly evident in his thinking about Christian intellectual heritage and his chosen examples of authentic Christianity. In his writings, Jakas rejected neo-Thomist theology as mere speculations that solved questions of little practical importance: “They laugh at scholasticism, which addressed the question of how many devils can fit on the point of a needle. It should be remembered, however, that theology is not far removed from scholasticism. What Thomas Aquinas formulated in the 13th century, theologians

⁹⁸ Ibid., 93.

have hardly dared to change until recent times.”⁹⁹ The early Christianity, whose image was cherished by Maceina and Yla, was not a model for Jakas either: “The views of the so-called Church Fathers or the decisions of episcopal councils [*vyskupy kolektyvu*] are the almost unalterable norm, even though both were truly men of their age, expressing their own and their contemporaries’ thought. Why does their thought become binding on future ages?”¹⁰⁰ He implied that while the teachings of Christ were rooted outside of history, Christian thought and its institutions were contingent on its historical context. Religion, he explained, was not teaching or theology but a life that was based on respect for a human being.

Jakas looked for inspirations outside of what he perceived as conservative habits of thinking in the Church. Instead of relying on age-old traditions, he implied, Christians should look for inspiration in more contemporary examples. In his militant religiosity, Jakas was particularly inspired by the German art historian and cultural critic Julius Langbehn, who was one of the main influences behind the formation of the conservative revolutionary mindset in interwar Germany. At the end of his life, Langbehn converted to Catholicism, soon turning his intellectual efforts to denounce what he saw as compromises that the Church had made with modern culture.¹⁰¹ Jakas wrote a biography of Langbehn, in which the German thinker was portrayed as a true Christian, who sought to give Germany a new direction by inspiring spiritual and social renewal; hence the title of this book was *The Reformer (Reformatorius, 1939)* – that is, in Jakas’s interpretation, Langbehn was the reformer of German spiritual life. This was exactly how Jakas saw himself in Lithuania and his relationship with the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰¹ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 97-180.

institutionalized forms of Christianity.¹⁰² The German author, a lonely thinker and a stranger to bourgeois society provided an example for Jakas's endeavors in Lithuania.

The Church was not the only target of Jakas's criticism. In his writings, Jakas attacked the entire project of philosophy of culture that was developed by Lithuanian Catholic thinkers. Just like other Catholic intellectuals, Jakas was preoccupied with the search for ways in which Christianity could reorient the modern world that was increasingly materialistic and atheistic. However, he diverged from the Young Catholics by disassociating Christianity from any kind of attempt to modernize national culture. Jakas articulated his views in his 1939 book *Social Christianity* (*Socialinė krikščionybė*), in which, in a similar fashion to Maceina, he characterized the present through a gallery of moral-psychological types, all of which, Jakas contended, "some more, some less, proved to be defective concerning social Christianity."¹⁰³ There he attacked the Catholic philosophy of culture as representing the bourgeoisie that was disinterested in a profound social change.

In his analysis of the present state of Lithuanian society, Jakas identified a certain type of Christian, he named it an aesthete type (*elenganto tipas*), which played a role in diverting Christianity from its promise for radical social change. Even if he did not name it explicitly, Jakas described the program of philosophy of culture, developed by Šalkauskis and taken over by his students: "There are people that feel the malaise of Christianity today, see its tragedy, and are roughly aware of the causes of the tragedy. In their view, the fault lies in backwardness, stagnation, absorption in form, narrowness and darkness [...]. Christianity must be renewed, otherwise it will be

¹⁰² Povilas Jakas, *Reformatorius: Julius Langbehn* [The reformer: Julius Langbehn] (Kaunas: Akiratis, 1939).

¹⁰³ Povilas Jakas, *Socialinė krikščionybė* [Social Christianity] (Kaunas: Akiratis, 1939), 230.

ultimately expelled from the world.”¹⁰⁴ Some of descriptions Jakas gave seemed to be aimed directly at Šalkauskis: “He is a gentleman with people, especially in speech. He carefully cultivates the virtue of modesty. He considers a breach of any rule of courtesy to be an offence and repents.”¹⁰⁵

Jakas argued that philosophy of culture became an established social form that emphasizes intellectual sophistication and the external appearance of religiosity above the aspiration for a real social change. Moreover, it moved away from the Christian mission by concentrating on cultural advancement. Jakas summarized the views of Catholic thinkers on the relationship between religion and culture: “In these modern times there can only be a modern Christianity and its exponent can only be a modern Christian, who feels the pace of life and especially its cultural demands. The old wine must be poured into new forms. Then a modern, cultured, broad, deep, and living Christianity will impress the world [...] The Christian of this type has emphasized for himself, in a special way, the culture of the spirit that should be the most important aspiration of mankind and its most beautiful glory.”¹⁰⁶ Differently than Šalkauskis and his collaborators, Jakas maintained that Christianity was an agent of social reform, not of progress. In other words, its adherents had to seek that the nation should live a moral life, not some kind of cultural advancement.

The focus of Jakas’s criticism was Šalkauskis’s envisioned the Living Spirit movement, which we have discussed in Chapter 4. According to the young priest, this Šalkauskis’s envisioned movement primarily as a means to demonstrate one’s religiosity, rather than seek the betterment of social conditions for a wider society. Importantly, Jakas implied that Šalkauskis’s projected philosophy of culture, together

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 223.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 225.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 224.

with its ethno-pedagogical aspiration to educate the nation, grew into a self-interested Catholicism of a certain part of the intellectual elite. “Christian altruism remains alien to him, especially the sense of Christ in foggy slums and shabby clothes. In his spoken conversation or in a spirited article on religious revival, on the culture of the soul, on the living spirit, one always misses the Christian *misereor super turbam*, I have compassion on the crowd. It is as if he is communing with God and soaring on the heights of the spirit, whereas he is only consorting with his own egotism and giving in to illusions.”¹⁰⁷ Instead of inspiring the living spirit, Jakas asserted, this Christian aesthete spread only the bourgeois spirit.

Jakas was skeptical about a possibility of reconciliation of Christianity with modern culture. When he constructed his vision of social Christianity in opposition to the Living Spirit movement, Jakas implicitly criticized the entire interwar Lithuanian philosophy of culture. His construction of the opposition between Šalkauskis’s ideas and the pursuit of social justice was an important theoretical innovation. Whether Jakas was conscious about it or not, he rejected the central assumption of Šalkauskis’s thought – that religion and culture could reach a certain harmony. While Šalkauskis and his collaborators believed that culture could flourish only grounded on religious foundation, maintaining them as distinctive parts of the cosmic order, Jakas negated the ontological status of culture altogether, asserting that culture had to be subordinated to and absorbed by the requirements of religion.¹⁰⁸ Jakas implied that all the cultural advancement in history, if it was not followed by moral improvement, was irrelevant. In this respect, his view of the Middle Ages is characteristic: whereas other Catholic intellectuals, including Šalkauskis and Maceina, portrayed it as a period in

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 229.

¹⁰⁸ Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra lietuvių filosofų akiratyje* [Culture in the spotlight of Lithuanian philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012), 175-8.

which the ideal of harmony between religion and culture was achieved, with supernatural element of Christianity permeating both public and private life, Jakas suggested that it was another period full of injustices.¹⁰⁹

Having become acquainted with the ideas of Šalkauskis and his disciples, Jakas viewed philosophy of culture as a turning away from true Christianity. Before Jakas, as we have seen in Chapter 4, other Catholic intellectuals as well argued for social reform, however, none of them conceptualized it in opposition to cultural advancement. Consequently, there was a clear contrast between Jakas and the Young Catholics in 1939 and 1940: if the latter were invested in the preservation of Lithuanian national culture and statehood, the former remained silent about these issues. Distanced from the political issues of his days, Jakas's writings displayed a criticism of both the social reality as well as of the interwar Lithuanian philosophy of culture more generally. In this way, the young priest captured the changing mood of many Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals towards the relationship between Catholicism and modern culture, however, he advocated for a different solution than the Young Catholics.

5. 7. Cultural Armament

We do not know how Šalkauskis responded to the different visions of Catholic engagement and criticisms that were expressed by his former students, as he did not comment on them in public. However, his stance in the last years indicated that Šalkauskis remained true to his earlier commitment to the federalist vision of the state,

¹⁰⁹ Povilas Jakas, *Žmogus tarp žmonių, arba naujasis humanizmas* [Human being among human beings, or the new humanism] (Kaunas: Švyturys, 1940), 21-51.

in which different cultural influences would be synthesized into Lithuanian national culture. The continuity of his views was particularly evident in 1939 when he was elected the rector of the University of Kaunas. This appointment allowed him to implement some of the principles that he believed in the governance of the academic community. Observing the rise of anti-Semitic sentiments among the youth, Šalkauskis opposed the possibility of implementation of anti-Semitic regulations in the university, such as the introduction of separate benches for Jewish students. In 1940, Šalkauskis spoke out against anti-Semitism that was growing among the students, clearly stating that anti-Semitism was incompatible with the love for the fatherland and so its manifestations cannot be tolerated. Perceiving it as the “test for the societal education” of the youth, he explained that “we are dealing here not with discipline, but with the expression of anarchy, not with a sense of honor, but with a zoological instinct, not with the defense of the interests of the nation [*tautos interesų gynyba*], but with their detriment.”¹¹⁰

Indicative was the public lecture entitled “The Problem of Lithuanian Cultural Armament and Catholicism” that Šalkauskis gave at the conference of the Catholic Academy of Science; the lecture indicated Šalkauskis’s anxiety about the fate of European civilization and a sense of insecurity about the future of Lithuanian culture: “What awaits mankind, in which this trend towards idolatry and civilized barbarism is already powerfully manifesting itself, we have not yet seen, but we already feel it, worrying about the possible catastrophes of tomorrow. Their atmosphere is already spreading over the unhappy world, like apocalyptic echoes coming to us from the

¹¹⁰ “V[ytauto] D[idžiojo] Universiteto rektoriaus Prof. St. Šalkauskio pasikalbėjimas su žurnalistais” [The rector of the University of Kaunas, Prof. Šalkauskis talks to journalists], in Stasys Šalkauskis, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 9, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012), 257-69, hete at: 260.

future.”¹¹¹ Facing the turbulences of international politics, he suggested, Lithuanian Catholics had to focus on the preservation of their national culture.

Similarly to Maceina, whose views we have discussed earlier in this chapter, Šalkauskis abandoned the emphasis on the cultural synthesis of the East and the West, implying that at the present moment, Lithuanian culture was on defense. Employing war-like terminology, he argued that Lithuanians must “arm culturally” themselves to preserve their national individuality. In his lecture, he spoke of the need for “cultural armament.” Only a cultural capacity could protect the nations that were facing the present political challenges.

We live in one of the most turbulent places in Europe, where we are being grinded and hammered by various international interests, influences, and pressures from big countries. In such a situation, a nation needs to have the durability and toughness of a diamond to remain materially and morally independent of any neighboring power. But these diamond qualities [...] is, in fact, a cultural capacity that makes the national individuality resilient, creative, [and] invincible.¹¹²

Nations with a high cultural level, he argued, were more resilient – the recognition that a certain nation had a highly cultured more than anything else guaranteed it political independence. It was necessary to understand this, he contended, because at the moment the fate of the Lithuanian nation was being decided: “In the future, the revision of the state territories and even of the independence of the country itself is eventually possible. The national-cultural resilience of a nation and its cultural significance can then play a decisive role.”¹¹³

Stressing the importance of culture for the independence of Lithuania, Šalkauskis continued believing in the advantages of Christianity, suggesting that only Christianity

¹¹¹ Stasys Šalkauskis “Kultūrinio lietuvių tautos apsiginklavimo problema ir katolicizmas” [The problem of the cultural armament of the Lithuanian nation and Catholicism], *Lietuvos katalikų mokslo akademijos suvažiavimo darbai*, vol. 3, ed. Juozas Eretas (Kaunas: Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademija, 1940), 25.

¹¹² Ibid., 14.

¹¹³ Ibid.

could provide a modernizing impulse for the national culture. The nation's historical experience showed, Šalkauskis argued, that Christianity elevated national culture to a higher level: "For the Lithuanians, like for other neighboring nations, Christianity was a religious, cultural and national necessity; it is a misfortune that the Lithuanians were few centuries late to embrace it, while at that time their Slavic neighbors were already enjoying the benefits of the Christian civilization and armed themselves with national and cultural weapons."¹¹⁴ National culture, Šalkauskis suggested, had the best chance of blossoming when it had a "normal" relationship with religion. Predicting that developments in international politics pointed to a war, Šalkauskis was clear that only religion could provide the cultured world with the necessary capacity to survive the upcoming hostile times.

An analysis of the cultural life of peoples could show that what is consistently valuable and positive, after all, has its origin in Christian civilization and now finds in it support and protection. When now civilized barbarism is rushing in to take over the civilized world from the left and right, Christianity is the most hopeful balancing factor that protects universal cultural values, defends at once the rights of the individual and the foundations of society, true authority and well-understood freedom, and at the same time guarantees the possibility of further progress.¹¹⁵

Therefore, he did not change his long-held view that only Christianity could provide an antidote to the crisis of European culture and was the best foundation for a national culture that strived for universal importance and asserted that state's cultural policy that strived for "cultural armament" had to recognize the "organic" relationship between religion and culture.

Another indicative example of this defensive mindset was presented by Šalkauskis's long-time friend and colleague, Pakštas. Anticipating the imminent coming of war, he repeated his earlier calls for cultural and moral advancement, arguing for the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

awakening of Lithuanian dynamism. Facing the threat, he reasoned, Lithuanian patriotism had to be strengthened: “The sense of our honor, the clearer perception of the dangers to the Lithuanian nation and the need to compete more successfully with our neighbors force our national understanding and statehood to develop into more pronounced forms, which lead to a true nationalism [*prie tikrojo nacionalizmo*] that is well-organized and active.”¹¹⁶ Like Šalkauskis, Pakštas stressed that small nations needed “cultural armaments.” The smaller the nation, he suggested, the higher its cultural level must be to survive. Therefore, the greatest emphasis must be placed on science, schools, and artistic and cultural institutions. According to Pakštas, the Ministry of Education was just as important as the Ministry of Defense. “In this sphere we must have a perfectly clear ideal, to be pursued with all sincerity and great commitment. This ideal must be all the higher the more dangerous the place in which the nation lives. [...] The state must arm the nation with the truest weapons: reason, technology and virtue.”¹¹⁷

Pakštas came to believe that the center of Lithuanian culture had to be moved abroad. Pakštas, who had been arguing for the past decade that Lithuania’s position was geographically precarious, had assured at the beginning of 1939 that war would soon break out in Europe. Together with Šalkauskis, they began to think about what Lithuanians could still do to preserve their national individuality in the face of historical hardships. In his discussions with his associates, he talked about the need to take the values of Lithuanian culture abroad. Recalling those conversations, Ambrazevičius later recounted the ideas Pakštas had expressed in the discussion:

¹¹⁶ Kazys Pakštas, “Lietuviškojo dinamizmo gairės” [Guidelines for Lithuanian dynamism], *XX amžius*, February 20, 1939, 3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Before the conversation ended, he suddenly spoke of things that astonished everyone. He talked about the dangerousness of Lithuania's geographical position. He said that the danger was approaching very fast and that Lithuania could hardly avoid being occupied. He based his deductions on the growth of the two waves of Soviet and Nazi forces, which are about to collide. He spoke of the need to save cultural values and create conditions for Lithuanian action abroad. I remember him saying that the assets and antiquities of the Čiulionis Gallery should be taken to America; that a cadre of rickshaw pullers should be sent to the United States, who would be able to act when disaster struck; that 60 of the most talented students should be sent to America, and that money funds should be transferred abroad... His announcement was unexpected.¹¹⁸

Throughout the spring of 1939, Pakštas addressed the heads of state, including President Smetona, in personal meetings outlining his proposals for saving Lithuanian culture. With no results, Pakštas tried to persuade them to transfer abroad valuable cultural artifacts stored in Kaunas museums, archives, and libraries. Pakštas wrote not long after: "In Kaunas, I have been kicking the doors of the official people for two months on all these matters, I have wasted a lot of valuable time, but I have not achieved any results."¹¹⁹ In parallel to his assertions about the need to move Lithuanian cultural artifacts abroad, Pakštas himself moved away from Lithuania. After in previous year receiving an offer from the University of California to become a visiting lecturer in geography and give courses on general political geography and human geography in Central Europe in the summer semester of 1939, he left for the United States in May 1939.

In some of his public pronouncements from late 1939 and 1940, Šalkauskis voiced his disappointment with the advancement of Lithuanian culture in the interwar period, asserting that the current level of its culture was not high enough to guarantee the survival of the national project. With Lithuanian national culture still not reaching universal significance, he asserted, the prospects of the national project were

¹¹⁸ As quoted in Vyginas Bronius Pšibilskis, *Kazys Pakštas ir atsarginė Lietuva* [Kazys Pakštas and the reserve Lithuania] (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2021), 181.

¹¹⁹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 182.

uncertain: “We have not yet reached a universal significance in our work, which is why, among other things, our work is not individual enough: it is a law of national culture that its individuality is in direct relation to its universality. As long as we have not yet reached a degree of universal significance in our cultural creation, we cannot speak of the true individuality of our creation. It is neither sufficiently established [*nusistovėjusi*], nor has it matured nationally [*tautiškai subrendusi*], nor has it acquired its distinctive style.”¹²⁰ Characteristic of Šalkauskis’s disappointment about the state of Lithuanian national culture was his regret that throughout the two decades of independence the state did not establish a special institution, the Chamber of Culture (*Kultūros rūmai*), that would take care of the advancement of the national culture, implying that during the interwar period the cultural and spiritual aspects of life were relegated only secondary importance: “We have all sorts of chambers, but in this system of chambers there is a distinct lack of the most important chamber, which should, among other things, take care of our liberation from our ill-fated historical legacy and of the urgent need to arm [ourselves] culturally.”¹²¹ The chances of the Lithuanian nation to survive the upcoming calamities in European politics did not look great to Šalkauskis, who increasingly sounded desperate: “If our historical vices continue to be fed and driven, so to speak, to the very depths of our national spirit, and if, at the same time, the armament of our culture is not addressed with all seriousness and breadth, a national catastrophe of the worst kind will be all but inevitable. [...] We need protection against servility to the same degree as anti-aircraft protection: the latter to preserve our physical life, the former to preserve our moral life [...]”¹²²

¹²⁰ Stasys Šalkauskis, “Lietuvių tauta ir jos ateitis” [Lithuanian nation and its future], *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 4, ed. Arūnas Sverdiolas (Vilnius: Mintis, 1995), 540-3, here at: 542.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 543.

¹²² *Ibid.*

5. 8. Maceina and the Destruction of Catholic Philosophy of Culture

Among all the young Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals during the final years of the interwar period, Maceina stood out for providing the most sophisticated reflections on the future of Christianity and European civilization. Maceina's *The Downfall of the Bourgeoisie* (*Buržuazijos žlugimas*), which he published just months before the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940, was the last major philosophical work by interwar Lithuanian Catholic thinkers. In this book, Maceina came back to the analysis of three spiritual dispositions, the Bourgeois, Promethean, and Christian, which he first articulated in his lectures in the spring of 1937, now modifying his theory to correspond to the political situation in the present moment. Exploring this book reveals how Maceina's views on European modernity changed in the final years of the interwar period and highlights his discontent with Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture and neo-scholastic orthodoxy in general.

Central to Maceina's analysis of history was his emphasis on the spiritual: "Man's external life is only a manifestation of his inner disposition. The external history of man is the projection of his internal history in time and space."¹²³ Maceina presented history as a struggle between three different moral-psychological dispositions, the Bourgeois, the Promethean, and the Christian, which arose from the internal life of man and aimed to give a direction to history: "When the Bourgeois, Promethean, and Christian style of life passes from the individual sphere into the social sphere, when it overpowers the objective spirit, then we are confronted with the bourgeoisie, Prometheanism, and Christianity in their historical manifestations. Then the

¹²³ Antanas Maceina, "Trys galybės: Buržuazija, prometėjizmas ir krikščionybė" [The three powers: The bourgeoisie, Prometheanism and Christianity], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 18, 411-2, here at: 412.

psychological power of these three structures is transformed into *historical* power.”¹²⁴

In his presentation, these spirits determined entire historical periods: the Middle Ages were dominated by the Christian spirit, the Renaissance by the Promethean spirit, meanwhile since the eighteenth century to the First World War the Bourgeois spirit was the decisive one. The prevalence of one spiritual disposition meant that the other two became peripheral in public life. Therefore, in his analysis Maceina framed the contemporary political situation as part of a larger process – a special moment in European culture history, which began with the First World War, when the Bourgeois spirit was losing its position in public life and the struggle between the three dispositions for domination of European public life had been renewed.

In 1937 lectures, Maceina asserted that the present was a liminal period in European cultural history, where old social and political structures were fading, and new ones were yet to emerge; the future of Europe remained to be decided by Christianity’s struggle with competing ideological systems. However, in 1940, he was much more anxious about the future of Europe and the prospects of Christianity in it. At the moment when the present forms of modern society, such as the capitalist form of economic production and the liberal state, were collapsing, Maceina predicted that soon Bolshevism and National Socialism would become the dominant factors in public life.¹²⁵ Maceina observed: “All the signs are that the bourgeoisie as a historical

¹²⁴ Antanas Maceina, *Buržuazijos žlugimas* [The downfall of the bourgeoisie] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1940), 20.

¹²⁵ Even if Maceina did not mention National Socialism explicitly, the term that he used, *nacionalizmas*, which I translate as hypernationalism, referred to this ideology. For his explanation of what is *nacionalizmas* see: Antanas Maceina, “Nacionalizmo pagrindai” [The foundations of hypernationalism], *Židinys*, 1934, No. 5-6, 480-8. Maceina continued to use the term Prometheanism in the same way as in the earlier years, that is, to note both Bolshevism and Nazism. In 1937, Maceina asserted that “[i]n our day, the Promethean principle is erupting in the form of Bolshevism and hypernationalism,” asserting that “one who knows the nature of these two trends of spirit will not be able to say that we are dealing here with weak creatures.” Antanas Maceina, “Trys galybės: Buržuazija, prometėjizmas ir krikščionybė” [The three powers: The bourgeoisie, Prometheanism and Christianity], *Naujoji Romuva*, 1937, No. 19, 436-7, here at: 437.

form will lose this struggle. It is already being undermined by the destruction of the bourgeoisie as a social class. But also, the Bourgeois spirit itself is increasingly receding from life. Positivism is losing out in science, aestheticism in art, moralism is being pushed out of morality, clericalism is retreating from religion, democratism from social life.”¹²⁶

Seeing the present political situation, Maceina believed that Promethean ideologies surpassed Christianity in their creativity and would win over the soul of the modern man. “Prometheanism seems to be destined to create a new style of life for Europe and perhaps for the whole world.”¹²⁷ This marked a significant shift from his previous belief, just a few years earlier, that Christianity could become the dominant moral-psychological disposition. Maceina now suggested that Prometheanism would dictate the direction of European culture, leaving no room for a Christian-inspired order. He claimed that Prometheanism held the key to the future: “Prometheanism is a clear and open denier of Christianity, not so much psychologically as ontologically. [...] The Christian and Promethean lifestyles discriminate between each other. [...] If, therefore, the present history is more and more under the influence of Prometheanism, if for the present life the Promethean style is being created more and more, it is clear that Christianity will not master [*neapvaldys*] public life. Public life, its institutions, its objective spirit will not be permeated by the Christian principle.”¹²⁸

Maceina’s recognition of the superiority of Bolshevism and Nazism led some scholars to conclude that he was simultaneously attracted to both of them.¹²⁹ However, a more

¹²⁶ Antanas Maceina, *Buržuazijos žlugimas* [The downfall of the bourgeoisie] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1940), 32-3.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ For the view that Maceina was attracted to Prometheanism see: Leonidas Donskis, “Antanas Maceina: doktrininis intelektualas XX amžiaus lietuvių kultūroje” [Antanas Maceina: Doctrinal

careful reading of the 1940 book *The Downfall of the Bourgeoisie* comparing it with his assertions from 1937, which were discussed in the previous chapter, indicates Maceina's pessimism about the future and his disappointment with the hierarchical ecclesiastical order that was unable to inspire religious renewal. Acknowledging the superiority of Prometheanism, Maceina recognized the realities of the present moment, projecting the domination of fascism and communism into the future, however, he did not embrace them.

Observing the success of the Promethean movements, Maceina grew concerned about the future of Christianity. He foresaw a world where the Church would be eliminated from public life. However, Maceina also held the belief that this diminished worldly importance would, paradoxically, lead to the ultimate spiritual revival of Christianity. Maceina was clear that the earthly shortcomings of Christianity did not reduce the value of its eternal teachings. He claimed that Christianity was never as morally strong as it was during the first ages when it was persecuted in the Roman Empire: “[i]n the last one and a half thousand years, excluding the first ages, Christianity has never been as disconnected from the worldly things as it is today. And in one and a half thousand years it has not been as united, as morally great, as unbreakable as it is today.”¹³⁰ In 1940, facing the Second World War, Maceina draw a parallel between the present decline of the Church's positions and the first ages of Christianity, before it had become a significant force in the Roman Empire and European public life, suggesting that this state could only lead to the rise of authentic Christian spirituality:

The collapse of bourgeois forms of Christianity is very clear today. Today, it is said, in many countries Christianity is losing [its position] step by step. This is only half

intellectual in 20th-century Lithuanian culture], *Tarp Karlailio ir Klaipėdos: Visuomenės ir kultūros kritikos etiudai* (Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 1997), 188-228.

¹³⁰ Antanas Maceina, “Modernieji laikai ir krikščioniškasis atgimimas” [Modern times and Christian revival]. *Darbininkas*, December 16, 1938, 6.

true. It is not the Christian spirit that is losing out here, but the historical forms of Christianity that were created on a bourgeois ground and which the representatives of Christianity were either unable or unwilling to change in time. That with the defeat of these forms the Christian spirit itself is dealt a severe blow is self-evident. However, this collapse of the bourgeois forms, however painful, is only redemptive for the Christian spirit itself. In this purgatory, it is purified and cleansed. The Christianity of the future will be much less stained by its representatives than it is now and then it has been in the past.¹³¹

Maceina embraced the Church not as a hierarchical institution bound by legalistic formulas, but as a collective of people who freely decided to adopt its views and practices. Thus, he believed that the dissociation from worldly power would allow Christianity to come back to its original state, leading it into an eventual spiritual revival, because the disappearance of external forms would lead to a richer inner life. “We are living in a time when the human spirit, seeing the collapse of external forms, spontaneously pushes itself deeper and asks questions that are not normally asked in everyday existence.”¹³² Importantly, this future revival should not be understood as a “Prometheanization” of Christianity, but rather the purification of Christianity from the elements that were alien to its original spiritual tendency. The rise of Prometheanism would force Christianity to give up its current worldly positions, retreating into its native spiritual realm.

Even with the apparent failure of the Church to inspire social renewal, Maceina did not lose faith in the superiority of Christianity. Maceina believed that the secularization of public life, which would follow after the advent of Prometheanism, would lead toward the renewal of the Church, making it lose its bourgeois elements. “The bourgeois forms of Christianity, the bourgeois style of its expression, the bourgeois means it uses, will have to collapse with the defeated Bourgeois spirit.

¹³¹ Antanas Maceina, *Buržuazijos žlugimas* [The downfall of the bourgeoisie] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1940), 35-6.

¹³² Antanas Maceina, “Nepriklausomybės prasmė” [The meaning of the independence], *XX amžius*, February 10, 1940, 3.

Prometheanism will purify Christianity of all that degrades and corrupts it [...].”¹³³

The contemporary Church, Maceina implied, was a mere shadow of early Christianity. In his vision of the Church, Maceina stressed the organic and communal features of Christianity: while “organic” religiosity, Maceina suggested, impregnated the man from within, the cotemporary Church was a hierarchical institution that subjugated man and the world externally. Following the decline of the Bourgeois spirit, clericalism would be replaced by an “organic” grow of religiosity from within to without, because true religiosity permeated “the world from the inside like yeast.”¹³⁴

He predicted that this growth of the “organic” religiosity would be followed by the establishment of communal bonds characterized by fraternal love: “*it is the rebirth of a sympathetic Christianity, a Christianity that seeks to win the modern world and the modern man by anticipating his longings, his hopes, his sufferings, and his outer and inner misery.*”¹³⁵ In the new Church, the spiritual will take precedence over juridical formulas and institutional forms. “The adherents of Christianity will become more aware of the power of the idea. They will trust more in the power of the spirit than in legal norms and organizational measures. The Christian organism will become much more flexible because its apparently rigid forms will be largely broken down. The pneumatic side of Christianity will be brought up from the depths and will take precedence over the juridical side.”¹³⁶

Together with changes that he predicted will happen in the Church, Maceina believed that the revival of religious spirituality would bring an end to neo-scholastic

¹³³ Antanas Maceina, *Buržuazijos žlugimas* [The downfall of the bourgeoisie] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1940), 35.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 132.

¹³⁵ Antanas Maceina, “Modernieji laikai ir krikščioniškasis atgimimas” [Modern times and Christian revival], *Darbininkas*, December 16, 1938, 6.

¹³⁶ Antanas Maceina, *Buržuazijos žlugimas* [The downfall of the bourgeoisie] (Kaunas: Sakalas, 1940), 36-7.

orthodoxy. As we may recall, Maceina maintained his antipathy to neo-Thomism ever since the time of his studies at the theological seminary. In his writings on social justice, for example, he attacked Thomas Aquinas and embraced the Church Fathers instead. The apparent defeat of Christianity in the fight for the soul of the modern world pushed Maceina only to the further rejection of Neo-Scholasticism. Maceina embraced the importance of intuitive insight in philosophical reflection, completely dissociating from neo-scholastic orthodoxy. He suggested that authentic philosophizing emerged only from one's own experience, and not from belonging to a philosophical school:

*The act of philosophical cognition is essentially personal. Truth is personal. Truth cannot be given from above. It has to be experienced within. It has to be experienced in one's personal inner experience. Only then is it not only true from an objective point of view, but it is true for me, which means that it has become identical to my person and has become part of my inner life. Philosophical knowledge is therefore only possible through the human being, that is to say, through the person. Wherever the human person is excluded from philosophical work, there is no true philosophical knowledge. There is only the repetition of what has already been said.*¹³⁷

Emphasizing the importance of personal experience, Maceina explained that philosophical schools were the expressions of the Bourgeois spirit, which he equated with the lack of creative ability and the aversion to originality. With this understanding of the basic characteristics of the Bourgeois spirit, Maceina described neo-Thomism as the most bourgeois philosophical school of all:

Every philosophical school is bourgeois. And the more the school is defined, the more its adherents are attached to the ideas of the leader of the school, the more bourgeois this school is. In this respect, the most defined, the most formed, the most united, and at the same time the most bourgeois, is the *Thomist* school of philosophy today, in which all the bourgeois power [*svoris*] of the Catholic philosophers concentrates. Ever since Pope Leo XIII called on Catholics to turn to St. Thomas, "Ite ad Thomam," many Catholic philosophers have considered it their duty to be as faithful as possible to St. Thomas's ideas, not to deviate from them, to repeat them and to proclaim them in all kinds of languages and on all kinds of occasions. When the Code of Canon Law ordered the teaching of philosophy "ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis" in Catholic

¹³⁷ Ibid., 193-4.

universities, seminaries, and faculties, this fidelity became almost a religious matter. Several professors in Rome submitted 24 theses to the Congregation for Studies, which this Congregation as if it had been set up for a philosophical cause, recognized as the most important philosophical principles of St. Thomas. The foundation for the Thomist school of philosophy was thus laid. It is in this school that all those who, lacking personal creativity in the field of thought, take bourgeois rest on the laurels of St. Thomas.¹³⁸

Maceina perceived the lack of creativity at the heart of neo-Thomist philosophy. Instead of authentic philosophizing, neo-scholastics were only concerned with uncritical acceptance and repetition of the ideas put forward by Thomas Aquinas, remaining blind to their own experience. In other words, Neo-Scholasticism was an expression of one's surrender to the Bourgeois spirit. With the Bourgeois spirit losing its grounds in the modern world, Maceina predicted that neo-scholastic orthodoxy would disintegrate, giving way to personal, and therefore original, thinking among Catholic philosophers.

Maceina's pronouncements indicated the collapse of philosophy of culture that was developed by Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals. Maceina dissociated culture and religion from one another, treating both of them separately. In his writings on national culture Maceina embraced the nationally homogeneous state as a solution against the repercussions of European political conflicts. He believed that only the assertion of Lithuanian cultural dominance in public life could prevent the national individuality from succumbing to the cultural influences coming from abroad. Meanwhile, Maceina saw the secularization of public life in Europe as beneficial for the future revival of Christianity. In his articulated vision of the renewed Church, Maceina projected Christianity that was dissociated from institutional forms and legal formulas. The case

¹³⁸ Ibid., 194-5. This was a reference that had to be familiar to those who studied neo-scholastic philosophy at the University of Kaunas. The first neo-scholastic textbook published in Lithuanian, Albert Stöckl's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, contained these 24 theses that Maceina referred to, see Albertas Stöcklis, *Filosofijos istorijos bruožai* [The layout of the history of philosophy] (Kaunas: Švietimo ministerijos Knygų leidimo komisija, 1926).

of Maceina shows that Catholic intellectuals lost their confidence in the possibility to solve the European spiritual crisis by making Christianity the foundation of national and then European culture. Christianity alone could not prevent national culture from the threats of fascism and communism. Maceina sought to find solutions for how to save both realms independently from each other. By doing this he did not believe anymore Šalkauskis's claims that Christianity was able to solve the profound spiritual confusion of modern times.

In his writings from 1940, Maceina stressed the importance of the independence of the state for the survival of the nation, indicating once again that religion could not protect culture. Thus, in "The Meaning of The Independence," which was one of his last essays before the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in June 1940, Maceina wrote that "in the absence of independence, national culture is usually scattered, fractured, fragmented, and disunited," meanwhile "[t]he state provides the creation of the national culture with clearer guidelines, a shared direction [*bendros linkmės*] and more purposeful organizational forms."¹³⁹ In the face of the military threat, Europe's spiritual crisis was no longer the main subject of Maceina's thought. He supported his call to defend the state by asserting that only it could guarantee the nation the possibility of developing its national individuality. Religion played no part in this vision and, as we have seen above, was to be relegated to the inner realm. Thus, when he spoke of the necessity of preserving Lithuania's independence, he depicted the state as the "objectivation" of national culture and its protector. Šalkauskis's philosophy of culture was dead.

¹³⁹ Antanas Maceina, "Nepriklausomybės prasmė" [The meaning of the independence], *XX amžius*, February 10, 1940, 3.

As this history of philosophy of culture that the thesis outlined shows, Šalkauskis's vision of the relationship between culture and religion was viable as long as the independence of the Lithuanian state was guaranteed. Then its future came into question, it appeared that religion could not provide an answer to the challenges of modernity. Catholic intellectuals turned to the state as the last resort for the Lithuanian national project. Their turn towards alternative means for the preservation of the nation was understandable; what was interesting was rather their justifications for it as well as their different visions of the state. Some of them, emphasized the importance of constitutional reforms in the state, as was the case of Dielininkaitis. Others, like Maceina, suggested the state had to ensure that every form of public life was an expression of national culture. Only Šalkauskis remained committed to the belief that only religion could save modern culture from disaster. Paradoxically, this led him to a dead end concerning the practical outcome of his philosophical beliefs – philosophy of culture, which he believed had to accommodate religion and culture, could not propose any viable solution to the European geopolitical conflict that unfolded in his eyes.

5. 9. Conclusions

By the late 1930s, the predictions about the downfall of the bourgeoisie seemed to come true soon. At that time, the ideologies and political regimes associated with the Promethean spirit appeared to be on the winning side of history. The rise of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union was perceived as posing the threat to both European cultural progress and the existence of Lithuanian national culture. In 1939 and 1940, it increasingly became difficult to imagine a cultural project that would entail a

harmonious relationship between culture and religion. The activism of Šalkauskis and his collaborators in those years was a complex phenomenon, which amalgamed slightly different but not mutually exclusive positions: the renewal of democracy, ethnically exclusive state, integral Catholicism that connected with people from different persuasions, civic unity as well as cultural armament that concentrated on the preservation of Lithuanian culture were options that all remained open to these Catholic activists. While Šalkauskis rejected any idea of an ethnically homogeneous state, remaining loyal to his earlier commitments, many of his students did embrace this vision of the national community. As the case of Maceina indicates, their differences were predicated on how much trust did they give to the power of Christianity to inspire the renewal of European culture. While Maceina doubted that this could happen soon, Šalkauskis stayed with his older views.

The political situation of their day with its heightened political and national tensions highlighted the contradictions of the theoretical commitments of the philosophy culture, as it became harder to reconcile their belief that Christianity had to become the foundation of national culture with their other belief that the state had to recognize the heterogeneous structure of society. One may read their writings starting with 1938 as an attempt to reconsider these theoretical commitments and as a consequence to rethink their positive cultural project. Reflecting on the political situation in Europe and at home, Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals became increasingly aware that their efforts to reorientate culture towards a religious ideal became fruitless. Starting with 1938, these Catholic thinkers directed their efforts towards the preservation of the national culture, more and more often stressing that the state was the guarantor of the national culture.

One important contradiction of their thought was their emphasis on the human “person,” which, they insisted, was the highest value. They repeatedly suggested that the state had to respect the primacy of the human “person,” at the same time suggesting that in the recently acquired Vilnius region, Polish culture had to be eliminated from public life. Personalism had a Protean nature and thus could be accommodated to different kinds of political visions, proving to be compatible with the exclusivist vision of the national community that the Young Catholics embraced in 1939 and 1940.

This gradual realization that not only European culture but in a way Lithuanian philosophy of culture was in crisis was perhaps the most evident in the writings of Maceina, who concluded that at the moment Christianity could not counterweight the Prometheanism that was on the rise. His 1940 book *The Collapse of the Bourgeoisie* encapsulated Maceina’s frustration about the current situation, however, even at that moment, he continued to believe that in the future Christianity could again become a guiding factor of life. He hoped that the retreat of Christianity into the private sphere would awaken a religious renewal and Christianity would come back to its spiritual core that was evident in early Christianity.

Conclusions

While the first philosophical reflections on the relationship between culture and religion emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, the discipline of philosophy of culture flourished after the First World War, in the context of continuous attempts by the elites of East Central Europe to “catch up” with the West. Its most prominent representative, Šalkauskis, who was inspired by the neo-scholastic orientation towards synthesis, sought to create a modern Lithuanian culture that would achieve a certain unity between different parts of society while retaining its plurality. Despite his trust in Christianity as the solution to the ills of modern society, Šalkauskis ended up less with a genuine synthesis than with an aspiration to achieve one, unable to propose a vision of modernity that would resolve tensions between different social groups and competing ideologies that arose outside the auditoriums of the university. By the late 1930s, when political and intellectual life in Lithuania was increasingly hijacked by the European great politics, this discrepancy between how things are and how they ought to be led his entire project into crisis. Even his closest collaborators began questioning Šalkauskis’s ideas.

While Šalkauskis remained the major Lithuanian Catholic intellectual throughout the interwar period, during the 1930s it was his students who rapidly arose into the center of the main intellectual and political debates. This new generation consisted of those who were born around the period of 1902-1906 and had been children during the First World War. After the establishment of Lithuanian independence, they were the first generation of Catholic intellectuals to study in a Lithuanian university, benefiting greatly from the new opportunities that emerged in the new state. The representatives of this generation first began articulating their positions in the press by the late 1920s,

being in their early twenties, and by the mid-1930s they already held relatively influential positions as teachers at university and editors in Catholic cultural reviews. By the mid-1930s, they became known as the Young Catholics. Despite their differences, Šalkauskis's students relied on his teacher's formulated ideas, throughout the 1930s both engaging with them and turning to new intellectual directions. The Young Catholics were less interested in neo-scholastic philosophy than their teachers were; however, they internalized their teachers' belief in the superiority of Christian teachings, continuing to maintain that only Christianity could provide stable foundations for modernity. Their imagined Lithuania was both modern and Catholic, which was particularly evident in the pages of *Naujoji Romuva*.

The Young Catholics chose culture as their focus, and for the most of the 1930s showed little interest in party politics. Drawing on various Catholic intellectual trends, which included Šalkauskis's advocated cultural autonomy, personalism, corporatism, and Social Catholicism, the Young Catholics imagined an anti-statist vision of modernity, in which the power of party politics would be limited while allowing society itself to develop in the "organic" way. They expressed their vision in the 1936 manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State," where they conceptualized a new political order that would increase the pace of modernization. The writings of the Young Catholics, however, indicated the tension between the recognition of social and ideological pluralism in society and the belief in the truth of their religious worldview, which was never explicitly reflected or resolved. Despite their aspirations to become leading intellectuals in the country, the solutions that Šalkauskis and the Young Catholics proposed were often vague and relatively unattractive to the masses outside certain groups of Catholic youth.

The analysis of the two generations of Catholic intellectuals in interwar Lithuania shows significant differences between them, which are particularly evident when compared their views on Aquinas. Many of Šalkauskis's generation attempted to adapt Aquinas's thirteenth-century philosophy to the needs of modern life, in which the question of the compatibility of national culture with religion played a key role; meanwhile, the young Catholics intellectuals were much less satisfied with Aquinas, exploring different approaches for the engagement with modern world. While the former continued the tendencies that were typical for the turn of the century "progressive" Neo-Scholasticism, the young intellectuals drew on much more diverse range of intellectual resources, while retaining their trust in Christianity as superior to any secular ideology. Nevertheless, even for the younger generation of Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals Aquinas remained an important reference. One of the main ways to contest the prevalence of Thomist philosophy in Catholic thought was to stress the importance of earlier philosophical resources, such as the Church Fathers, Augustine of Hippo, or even Saint Paul. Among the Young Catholics, the most vocal critic of Neo-Scholasticism was Maceina. As was evident from his 1940 book *The Downfall of the Bourgeoisie*, facing of the Second World War, he openly rejected neo-Thomism, asserting that it contradicted the spirit of authentic Christianity, and exploring alternatives to it. Maceina was extremely critical of the Neo-Scholasticism, which he saw as the cause of Catholic intellectuals' inability to properly respond to the challenges of political modernity.

The universal significance of Lithuanian culture that Šalkauskis aspired to achieve became an increasingly questionable goal by 1939, when tensions in the European great politics increasingly destabilized political and intellectual life in Lithuania. This was particularly evident in the work of Šalkauskis's closest pupil, Maceina, who

began questioning the feasibility of Šalkauskis's proposed cultural synthesis as a model for the Lithuanian national project. By the late 1930s, the Young Catholics increasingly began advocating for the strong executive state that had to take care even of national culture, and this was a great change in their views when compared to their 1936 manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State." This change was a good indication of how their agenda was shaped by political events on European stage, and especially by the rise of fascism and communism, both of which were perceived as threats to both national advancement and European civilization in general.

The period of 1939 and 1940 reveals a darker side of the personalist commitments of Catholic intellectuals. By that time, it became evident that the Young Catholics saw their personalism as compatible with their exclusivist politics, which advocated for the resolution of national tensions in the Vilnius Region by the elimination of the Polish culture from public life. Advocating this, these Catholic intellectuals simultaneously asserted the importance of the human "person," which, they suggested, had to be respected in politics. They sought to find unity between different political parties in Lithuania, believing that one of the unifying factors was their adherence to the human "person." This was exemplified by Maceina, who advocated for the exclusion of the Polish culture while embracing the human "person." In 1940, Maceina predicted the downfall of the bourgeoisie, which seemed to come true soon, as both National Socialism and Soviet Bolshevism, both of which he associated with the Promethean spirit, appeared to be on the winning side of history. The upcoming events in 1941 seemed to confirm Maceina's belief in the downfall of liberalism and the political forms associated with it, particularly with the military success of Nazi Germany and the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in June 1940.

As I show in the thesis, during 1939 and 1940, the Young Catholic intellectuals changed significantly in their views, while Šalkauskis remained committed to the project that he developed first in his book *On the Boundary of Two Worlds*. Reacting to the “spiritual” situation in Europe, the Young Catholics reconsidered their commitments to the Lithuanian nation-making as well as to Christianity. By 1940, it seemed that the European “spiritual” crisis caused the crisis of Šalkauskis’s philosophy of culture in Lithuania, which was illustrated not only by Maceina’s rejection of both Neo-Scholasticism and the vision of Lithuanian national individuality that was proposed by Šalkauskis. Maceina’s writings indicated a widespread sense of the chasm between Catholicism and modernity. In turn, this sense that they were at odds with each other provoked different responses from Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals.

The inability to achieve the unity that Šalkauskis aspired to was evident in 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, starting the Operation Barbarossa. In Lithuania, Germany’s launch of the war on the Eastern Front started the so-called June Uprising against the Soviets, when Lithuanian intellectuals announced the re-establishment of independent Lithuania under the self-proclaimed Provisional Government. The new cabinet was diverse in its ideological composition, however, it had a strong Catholic presence. Among its ministers was a small group of former Šalkauskis’s students: besides Ambrazevičius, who became the new Prime Minister, for a short time Dielininkaitis held the position of the Minister of Labour, while the office of the Minister of Education was given to Maceina, however, at the time he was in Berlin, where he retreated escaping the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1940, and therefore unable to join the new government.

Nothing demonstrated the greater difference between Šalkauskis's formulated agenda of cultural synthesis in his lectures on philosophy of culture in the 1920s and the political program of the Provisional Government, which was centered on the self-preservation of the Lithuanian nation, without the necessary sensitivity related to the Jewish situation in the country. The events of 1941 indicated how the agenda of the Young Catholics became different from that of Šalkauskis in the context of the political radicalization of European countries. By 1941, the political vision of the Young Catholics become subordinated to the priority of their nation's self-preservation, while the questions of Christian faith and its compatibility with modernity were side-lined. While they still shared the vision of the importance of Christianity, they complied with the demands of the moment that led them to prioritize their national ambitions over the universal aspirations of Christianity.

To understand the complexities of Catholicism and philosophy of culture in Lithuania during the late 1930s and early 1940s, it is useful to remember the historiographical debate between Lithuanian historians about the ideological leanings of Maceina and the rest of the Young Catholics, with some suggesting that these Catholic intellectuals demonstrated their affinity to fascism, while others stressing that the Young Catholics opposed the Smetona regime and advocated for the equal treatment of every ideological group in the country. These two camps came to opposing conclusions about interwar Lithuanian Catholic intellectuals. The first camp drew a direct line between the manifesto "Towards the Creation of an Organic State" and their war-time involvement, projecting fascist leanings into their ideological commitments of the mid-1930s, while the second camp emphasized the continuities between their envisioned organic state and the ideas that Lithuanian émigré Catholic intellectuals developed in Western Europe from 1950s onwards. Both positions have shortcomings:

the first camp portrayed Maceina's ideas as static, without taking into account the changes that his thought undergone during the 1930s, while the second one added to this lack of historical sensitivity by downplaying Catholic political involvement during the Second World War. Both strategies to conceptualize interwar Catholic intellectual life in Lithuania did not take into account the complexities of Catholic intellectual and political engagement during the 1930s and early 1940s. To put it short, Maceina in 1931 was not the same Maceina in 1941 – this seemingly simple and obvious conclusion is entirely missing in the debate on Maceina's political views and more broadly on interwar Lithuanian Catholic political culture. The history of philosophy of culture that the thesis has outlined indicated a break in the thinking of the Young Catholics that happened on the eve of the Second World War – it was no longer plausible for them to believe that Christianity alone would provide foundations for a lasting Lithuanian national culture; they realized the importance of the state in achieving this task, and embraced it. This, however, was not an attempt to bring forth a certain spiritual revolution, but rather an outcome of not being able to carry out one.

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Mūsų Vilnius

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