FROM THE EDITORS

IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE ALONE...

Having created the world and the human being, Lord God says: “It is not good that the man should be alone,” and he promises to “make a suitable partner for him” (Gn 2:18). The biblical picture shows that none of the things of the existing world appeased Adam’s original solitude. Only Eve did. At the same time, the biblical scene shows that man—who is “ontically alone”—is inherently open to a relationship with another human being.

Things have not changed since the creation of the world: it is not good for a human being to be alone. This is confirmed by psychological research and by human experience as such, and expressed, for instance, in poetry, literature, paintings, or movies. Today, the experience of loneliness has become so common that it is considered among the most serious problems generated by modern civilization. The scope of the phenomenon of loneliness has grown to the point that it is not infrequently considered as an illness. Already in 2018, the then British Prime Minister Theresa May appointed a Minister for Loneliness, entrusting this position to Tracey Crouch, whose main task was fighting and counteracting social isolation.[1] Such a move was not surprising, if we look at the data. In 2017, the Jo Cox Loneliness Commission investigating the scale of the phenomenon of loneliness published the following report: over nine million adults are often or always lonely, 50% of disabled people will be lonely on any given day, for 3.6 million people aged 65 television is the main form of company.[2] Another British statistic indicates that 45% of adults (twenty five million people) feel occasionally, sometimes or often lonely, and half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all.[3] The coronavirus pandemic and the restrictions introduced at that time painfully and powerfully exposed the problem of loneliness. In 2021, the then Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihide Suga appointed a Minister for Loneliness, whose mission was developing means of building interpersonal relationships (this position was entrusted to Tetsushi Sakamoto).[4] Germany also considers establishing a unit similar to a ministry for loneliness. Already in 2019, there were many demands from almost all German political parties to establish a central federal agency to combat the negative social effects of loneliness.[5] The problem is growing also in Poland. The report published in 2022 by Instytut Pokolenia (The Generations Institute) indicates that 53% of Poles experience loneliness, almost two-fifths (39%) declare that they often or sometimes feel abandoned, and more than one-third (35%) have no one to whom they could turn to for help. The feeling of loneliness or aloneness affects almost every second young person (46%), in particular young men (55% of men under the age of twenty-four experience a strong sense of loneliness).[6]

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[1] See “PM Launches Government’s First Loneliness Strategy,” press release, GOV.UK, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-launches-governments-first-loneliness-strategy. See also “Ministerstwo samotności,” Opoka, https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/I/IP/opiekun201806-samotnosc.

[2] See Jo Cox, “Lonelines: Start a Conversation,” ageUK, https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_dec17_jocox_commission_finalreport.pdf.

[3] See “Facts and Statistics about Loneliness,” Campaign to End Loneliness, https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/facts-and-statistics/.

[4] See Katie Warren, “Japan Has Appointed a ‘Minister of Loneliness’ after Seeing Suicide Rates in the Country Increase for the First Time in 11 Years, Insider, https://www.insider.com/japan-minister-of-loneliness-suicides-rise-pandemic-2021-2.

[5] See “Germany Mulls the Setting Up a National Ministry for Loneliness”, cde.news, https://cde.news/germany-mulls-the-setting-up-of-setting-up-a-national-ministry-for-loneliness/.

[6] See Instytut Pokolenia, “Raport: Poczucie samotności wśród dorosłych Polaków, z wprowadzeniem prof. dr hab. Elżbiety Mączyńskiej pt. Syndrom samotności jako groźne

What exactly is loneliness? Researchers dealing with the problem distinguish it from solitude or isolation and list many types of each phenomenon. However, grasping the very core of loneliness does not involve deep scientific investigations: such a "core" is the lack of a loving "thou." This is why psychologists talk about loneliness in terms of a lack of an emotional bond with others, having in mind, however, not just any such bond, but one that corresponds to the nature of the human being. A physical absence of others is not yet a cause of loneliness. One may leave one's loved ones and go to "a desert place," should one not wish to be distracted while carrying out a mission. One is alone then, but not lonely, for one knows that someone is there thinking of them, loving them, missing them and waiting for their return. However, one may also happen to be surrounded by others, for instance, while in a crowd of friends having fun, and yet feel painfully lonely, because one knows that these people do not care about them. The situation can be even worse: they care as long as one is beautiful, rich, funny, and successful, but they will withdraw once problems in one's life start to amount. After all, it is not without a reason that we take seriously the wisdom of the proverb which says that a friend in need is a friend indeed.

The development of information and communication technologies has made the human dream of being in touch with others beyond the boundaries of space come true. Recently, such contact is apparently possible also beyond the boundaries of time, since there are already technologies to create digital avatars of the dead, enabling conversation with such "persons." However, while it may seem a paradox, the progress in question has not resulted in a decrease of loneliness experienced by human beings. On the contrary, it can be said that the scope of the feeling of "loneliness in a crowd of people" has increased. Human beings focus on creating numerous social media accounts, developing online friendships, publicly commenting on events from their own and other people's lives, and on collecting the so-called likes... Yet, instead of enjoying their participation in a wonderful, united and constantly growing community (the human family, or the global village) which gives them a sense of closeness and security, they feel increasingly unhappy and isolated. This, in turn, makes them keep looking for ways to overcome their condition: some happen to buy pets (and hold "birthday parties" for them) or "adopt" baby dolls (who they treat as family members, giving them names, feeding and diapering them, and going with them for walks).[7] Men sometimes choose dolls as their life partners. They give the dolls names, buy them clothes, go to shops and restaurants with them, and introduce them to their families. It is not uncommon that a man leaves his wife and children for a doll.[8] According to AI experts, by 2050, human–robot marriage will be legalized, as technology development allows for the creation of robots that look more and more like humans. So called "empathic robots" will probably become caregivers to the sick and the elderly.[9] Apparently we have not taken to heart the biblical story of the man who "gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals," but none of them "proved to be the suitable partner" (Gn 2:20) for him. Only Eve turned out a proper one. "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gn 2:23), the man said. Nowadays the "suitable" partner has been replaced either by animals or by creations of technology.

Christianity brings still another problem to the fore, namely, the one of death. Joseph Ratzinger writes that hell is fear and "real, total loneliness ... that the word 'love' can no longer

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schorzenie społeczne," https://instytutpokolenia.pl/raportosamotnosci/.

[7] See e.g. Josephine F u l l e r, "Babes in Arms," *The Sun*, 12 June 2022, The Sun US, https://www.the-sun.com/lifestyle/5547319/six-children-four-arent-real-people-troll-me/.

[8] See e.g. Chukwumedia, "Love or Madness: See photos of Men Who Fell in Love and Got Married to Dolls," Opera News, https://ng.opera.news/ng/en/entertainment/d1dfe2c0df35ec12be65ece2f961d970; "Dla gumowej lalki porzucił żonę i dzieci," Polish Express. Styl życia, https://www.polishexpress.co.uk/dla-gumowej-lalki-porzucil-zone-i-dzieci.

[9] See Kasper K a l i n o w s k i, *Empatyczne roboty zastąpią w przyszłości opiekunów chorych i osób starszych. Ale niosą też zagrożenia*, wyborcza.pl, https://wyborcza.pl/Jutronauci/7,165057,27607715,empatyczne-roboty-zastapia-w-przyszlosci-opiekunow-chorych-i.html.

penetrate."[10] Loneliness can be healed only by a loving "thou." But there is such a moment when, in human terms, a person is totally alone: it is the moment of death. The one who conquered death was Christ. Dying on the Cross, "Christ strode through the gate of our final loneliness.... Where no voice can reach us any longer, there is He."[11] Yet the goal contemporary humans have set for themselves is to overcome death. Certain proponents of transhumanism, for instance, aim at replacing the "unreliable" biological human body with a "technical" one which would guarantee immortality. Thus Christ will no longer be needed...

Why is the scale of loneliness increasing? Dariusz Karłowicz claims that the loneliness of contemporary Western man is a result of the prevailing intellectual attitude which promotes individualistic anthropology. He says, "As long as the political system implements such preconceptions, the percentage of lonely people will grow and no ministries will change it."[12] If we accept this diagnosis, we can only conclude by pointing out that what we are dealing here with is another phenomenon negatively affecting human beings due to an anthropological error. Can animals and robots be antidotes for loneliness?

The volume of *Ethos* focused on the issue of broadly conceived loneliness is intended as a contribution to the ongoing discussion on the phenomenon in question. In the case of our journal, this fact is not without significance. In 2022, The John Paul II Institute, which is the publisher of *Ethos*, is celebrating its fortieth anniversary. The John Paul II Institute was founded by the decision of the Senate of the Catholic University of Lublin on 25 June 1982 as an "interdepartmental research and didactic unit" of the Catholic University of Lublin, dedicated to the study of "the thought of John Paul II and participation in the community of persons in the spirit of Christ's teaching, as preached by John Paul II."[13] One of the aims of the Institute and of *Ethos* is to conduct a continuous, top-level, scholarly dialogue between intellectuals diligently seeking truth, and thus to create an environment in which no one is alone with their questions and answers, an environment which is a genuine community rather than a collectivity guided by a shared interest. Therefore, the mission of the Institute, as well as the dialogue that takes place in *Ethos*, are immediate means of counteracting loneliness which precede establishment of any ministries. The issue of the anthropological error in which the loneliness of modern man is rooted will certainly be discussed during a conference "On the Need for a Philosophy of the Human Being," which will be held by the Institute in December 2022 to sum up its accomplishments.

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Since my statutory two four-year terms as Director of The John Paul II Institute and Editor-in-Chief of *Ethos* end on 31 August 2022, with this text, I wish to say goodbye to the readers. My immediate successor will be Fr. Prof. Marek Słomka, whom I wish strength and inspiration to continue this responsible work, accompanied by God's blessing and intercession of the Institute's Patron St. John Paul II. Yet, I hope that I am not saying goodbye forever. I have been appointed by the Council of the Institute of Philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin a member of the Scientific Board of the John Paul II Institute and (as until I became the Director of the Institute) a member of the Editorial Board of *Ethos* (since 2010, the John Paul II Institute has been a unit within the structure of the university's Faculty of Philosophy). Last but not least, I hope I am not saying goodbye as an author, for I want to remain in the community of those seeking truth so that I will never be threatened by destructive loneliness.

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[10] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 301.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] Dariusz Karłowicz, "Ministerstwo samotności", Teologia Polityczna, https://teologiapolityczna.pl/ministerstwo-samotnosci-2.

[13] An extract from the Statute of The John Paul II Institute.

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