

Style and Values – a Case Study of Theologian’s Lectures

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to analyse the stylistic methods Krzysztof Grzywocz uses in talking about values in his lectures published in the book *W duchu i przyjaźni* [In spirit and friendship]. It is the whole book, six hundred pages of his collected works, but in particular the one-hundred-page long chapter entitled “The Value of a Human Being”, which is the focus of this paper. The multilayer and interdisciplinary approach to values could be observed in those texts. The author was a theologian, psychotherapist, exorcist and aesthetician, a man who appreciated literature, art, and beauties of everyday life. He was both a theoretician and practitioner of axiology. He answers the questions what values are, what their functions are, what their role in human life is, what their lack means, and what to do in order to appreciate the value of our own life and that of others. The individual communication style of the lecturer is analysed as well as meaning of his message.

Keywords: conference, genre, aesthetics, meaning, religious discourse.

1. Introduction

Values are a very broad subject thoroughly discussed from very different points of view by many disciplines, always coming back as a core issue without which the understanding of human behaviour, culture and meaning of human life is rather difficult. Values are the central focus of philosophy, psychology, theology, linguistic studies (Wojtak, 2014, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2016, Puzynina and Bajerowa, 2000). The field of theolinguistics is related especially to the latter two (Gadomski, 2014, Makuchowska, 2011, 2017), and it is worth noticing how values are described and illustrated in the texts where those approaches are dominating.

The multilayer and interdisciplinary approach to values could be observed in the texts of Krzysztof Grzywocz – theologian, psychotherapist, exorcist and aesthetician, a man who appreciated literature, art, and beauties of everyday life. He was both a theoretician and practitioner of axiology. As his friend writes: “He loved eliciting what is beautiful. He encouraged others to surround themselves with beauty” (2017, p. 10). The aim of the paper is to analyse the stylistic methods Krzysztof Grzywocz uses in talking about values. He answers the questions what they are, what their functions are, what their role in human life is, what their lack means, and what to do in order to appreciate the value of our own life and that of others.

2. Religious Discourse

The main approaches in the research on the language of religion are: the “code” approach (the language of religion as a system), the stylistic approach and the genealogical approach to the language of religion (Gadomski, Gadomska, 2014, p. 24). Scholars emphasize the open nature of religious discourse: “Openness of religious discourse with regard to the linguistic means it uses is a fact. What is more, contemporary religious discourse undergoes the process of individualization and personalisation” (Wojtak, 2014, p. 29). „Religious discourse seen as a collection of communicative practices arising from the particular beliefs that are organized and institutionally sanctioned is something exceptional in comparison with other discourses. What is the most important is the broadening of discourse perspective to include a transcendental dimension” (Wojtak, 2014, p. 26).

“Taking the discursive perspective allows us to deal with the problem stated by Polish linguists asking whether other registers and genres encroach upon religious language” (Grzmil-Tylutki, 2011, p. 56). The religious style should be perceived as an open category, assimilating means from different areas of language performance and internally polarized (Wojtak, 2006, p. 141). The religious discourse could be understood in a narrow or broad way. On the one hand, there are texts strictly connected with sacred rituals that could be used to teach the doctrine, and on the other those connected with the profane sphere that are used to promote the point of view of certain Catholic or rather Christian values (Makuchowska, 2011, p. 24, Makuchowska, 2017).

The analysed texts could be seen as fruits of the missionary activity of the church that have didactic, scholarly and persuasive character (Makuchowska, 2011, p. 23). The texts could be incorporated in religious discourse for several reasons: their author was a priest, the publisher is the Society of the Divine Saviour, the audience were people gathered in the Centre of Spiritual Formation of Salvatorian Fathers in Krakow. What is more, the whole volume of texts received the permission of church authorities to publish known as *imprimatur*. The texts were presented during the School of Spiritual Guidance meetings, so they can be seen as didactic ones. As they also provide the testimony of authors’ beliefs, their religious mission could be recognized in them as well. As the author was a scholar, he uses also the academic discourse strategies. Altogether, the texts are very interesting from the intertextual and interdiscursive perspective.

3. The Theologian

Krzysztof Grzywocz was a 54 years old doctor of theology at the University of Opole; he lectured and preached in many places, his talks were recorded and listened to by many people for years. His life was very fruitful and there is a mystery connected with his last days of life. In July 2017, he left for Switzerland where he subsidised his fellow priest in the parish. While there he edited the recordings from the last sessions and sent

them to be published under the title: *W duchu i przyjaźni* [In spirit and friendship]. Then he went to climb his favourite Alps and he has never come back. Professionals and volunteers looked for him without any results. He is known to have said once to his brother – and the words were repeated during the farewell ceremony by the Bishop of Opole and reprinted in the introduction to the collection of his sermons – “If I had an accident in the mountains don’t look for my body, look for me” (cf. Wons, 2017, p. 19). His friends and fellow priests edited and published six hundred pages of his collected works quite soon after his disappearance. It is the whole book, but in particular the one-hundred-page long chapter entitled “Wartość człowieka” [The Value of a Human Being], which is the focus of this paper.

The book consists of seven chapters – one is an introduction (Spiritual diary of a friend) written by the fellow priest, Krzysztof Wons, and six others – one new and five reprinted – are authored by Krzysztof Grzywocz. The titles of the chapters let us see the broader interests of the scholar: “In spirit and friendship”, which lends the name to the whole collection, “In the darkness of depression”, “Unloved feelings”, “The value of a human being”, “Spirituality and dreams”, and “The art of listening. The meaning of listening in spiritual leadership”.

This book should be interpreted as belonging to religious discourse because of the circumstances involved and the persons engaged – the status of the speaker, the listeners and the place. It is a collection of particular lectures, so called “conferences”, the term meaning ‘a formal meeting that typically takes place over a number of days and involves people with a shared interest, especially one held regularly by an association or organization’. The word originates in the early 16th century (in the general sense of ‘conversation, talk’): from French *conférence* or Medieval Latin *conferentia*, from Latin *conferre* ‘bring together’ (cf. “confer”).¹ In Polish *konferencja* is defined as ‘the speech of a priest or lay member of the congregation during the Mass or elsewhere, on the subject of religion, ethics or similar’.² The texts are well edited but their primary oral characteristics is visible in the style, which is very vivid, full of colourful examples, repetitions of the main thoughts, which make the message clear and persuasive and allow the audience to maintain interest and show the sense of humour of the speaker.

4. Values and Style

The concept of values presented in the “Value of a human being” is strictly related to Krzysztof Grzywocz’s attitude to dealing with the subject. The analysed chapter consists of six parts 1. The phenomenon of values 2. The sense of value deprivation 3. Psychological background of the problem 4. Theological background of the problem 5.

¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/conference#Conference> [Accessed on 1 March 2018].

² *Słownik języka polskiego*, based on *Słownik 100 tysięcy potrzebnych słów*, ed. Jerzy Bralczyk, Warszawa 2005. <https://sjp.pwn.pl/o-nas> [Accessed on 1 March 2018].

Boosting your self-esteem, 6. Appreciating the value of others.

This titles show the author's central perspective on analysing values; he answers the questions: What are the values?, What happens if we lack them?, and What to do to develop them in oneself and in the others?. In this approach values as connected strictly with humans and are vital for their well-being.

Starting from the theoretical questions – if values are objective or subjective, Grzywocz claims that what matters is “experiencing values” that somehow precedes theorizing about them (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 292). The cognitive definition of values represented in Grzywocz writings could reconstructed it the following way:

1. Value is something we can experience.

The author gives many examples of the possibilities to experience something valuable. He names different objects, circumstances, animals or people:

Piece of art, beautiful landscape, dog, snow, sunset, or a second person (Grzywocz, 2017: 292).

He often uses adjectives to emphasise the values by naming them: *beautiful mountain trip, beautiful lake, good book, noble man* (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 295)

From these labels he passes onto details which make the listeners imagine the whole scene:

A child seeing the beautiful sea exclaims: “Mum, have a look, the sea is so wonderful, let us take a little into a jar and take it home”. (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 293)

He uses this narrative strategy for many other examples in other places of the text. He starts from the general notion: *beautiful music*, then mentions *the philharmonic*, which has a connotation with a particular type of music, i.e. classical music, and finally he is even more precise:

‘From this beautiful symphony, from this amazing piece of Antonin Dvořak something has remained in me.’ (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 295)

He names different pieces of literature to prove his point about their beauty, such as *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann, or *Night train to Lisbon* by Pascal Mercier, or gives examples of works of art: “Lady with an Ermine” by Leonardo da Vinci, “Death of the Virgin” or “Madonna of the Pilgrims” by Michelangelo Caravaggio. Sometimes he gives the geographical details where to find those objects, e.g. the latter could be admired at the Church of St. Augustin in Rome.

2. Values draw our attention, awake awe and admiration.

When seeing something nice, people exclaim in enthusiasm or say that they want to

continue staring at this object.

„Let us stay here and look longer” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 293)
 “We are looking at valuable things” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 344)

3. Values bring silence.

Here the author makes use of his linguistic competence, saying “it is a nice expression he was “struck dumb with awe””, as values bring tranquillity, peace and need for silence.

4. Values justify being.

He uses singular forms when talking about himself:

“What is valuable says to me: “You can be here, don’t go” – the value justifies my existence, adding: “Stay!”, “Don’t go” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 294)

He uses plural, inclusive forms, talking directly to the audience but also about them, and uses word *beautiful* repeatedly:

We are at the beautiful lake, and we say it is a pity to leave, “let us stay here”, let us built our house, with a beautiful porch here”... (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 294)

5. Values bring meaning and hope.

“Where is a value there is a beginning, which doesn’t leave the travellers, constantly offering them the freshness of the source”. (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 295)

6. Value doesn’t demand action.

“Sit in the sun. Stay here. You don’t have to act. You are valuable when you do something, but you are also valuable when you don’t act.

Value “teaches good, wise creative idleness, which is a source of action” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 295)

Grzywocz uses his knowledge of Latin, the language which is highly rooted in the Catholic Church tradition as part of philosophical and theological education and a trait of a religious discourse.

He uses Latin words and phrases presuming that listeners know them as well:

“We know Latin *agere* and *esse*, act and be”. [...] *Agere sequitur esse* – action follows being (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 296)

On another page, he writes about humbleness in the same way:

Latin *humilitas* is etymologically related to *humus* – ‘soil’ claiming that our point of weight should be close to the earth, so we could stand and walk in more stable position. Those who face reality are humble and have a great sense of value even when they realize that soil is dirty but precious and fertile.

7. Values shine.

The shining means there is a person/ someone behind it and we tend to ask who had made it so beautifully. The shining of values brings people to ask existential questions.

8. Values awake the need to share, give, take and cooperate.

“A value likes cooperation, it likes polyphony” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 313). It is like an instrument in an orchestra.

9. Values teach us to build distance.

They awake longing for bonds with others, which makes one’s world more open and broader as we try to shorten the distance to others.

“It is a pity our loved ones are not with us” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 297)

“I will never be your possession, I am me, and you are you”

“beauty [good, truth] attracts but at the same time creates distance and separates”.

10. Values are difficult to define.

“It is not possible to define a value – a value defines me”

“the world experiences, penetrates, defines me”. It makes me feel stable – Latin *stabilitas* of values, *stabilitas loci* – glowing in the world of stability (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 300)

This type of approach is connected with the inner-directed culture point of view as opposed to outer-directed culture (Trompenaars Hampden-Turner, 1997). The first one is usually attached to non-Western cultures attitudes. It is more about living in harmony with the environment; there are forces that cannot be controlled or influenced and therefore you have to adapt to these external circumstances.

11. Values make it possible to touch eternity and make us realize our fragility.

“Beautiful moments pass quickly” so value is “fragile, passing and eternal at the same time” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 302)

12. Values initiate creativity.

They make us active and creative. Values generate and create other values.

This is why it is important to choose surroundings (places and people) that are full of positive values (378)

13. Valuable things should be protected.

This is why borders and rules are needed. Grzywocz uses metaphors and comparisons to illustrate his point: our value is like a precious painting in a museum, an expensive car or a pearl.

“No one is surprised to see the guards in front of “A Lady with an Ermine” in The Czartoryski Museum in Krakow. No one asks the guards “what do you do here in front of “A Lady with an Ermine”. He just stands and guards the great piece of art. And that is it. In contrast, when someone sees a guard of three people standing in front of a crashed tin of Żywiec beer, one would have a right to ask: “Excuse me, but what are you doing here?” “We guard the crashed tin of Żywiec” – and this could be, gently speaking problematic. [...] You do not protect the waste dump (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 311)

“A good BMW car is valuable even when it stays in a garage” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 316)

“The human is a value is like a precious pearl and a priceless treasure” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 334)

“The awareness that we are precious as pearls protects us from evil” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 371)

14. Values are bonds.

“What is the most valuable for people are their bonds with others” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 337)

“People don’t have the bonds they are the bonds” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 338)

Christian tradition involves transmitting values and this transmission bonds us – *tradere* – transmitting values we stay bonded. (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 352)

He differentiates between the value of a human being and the feeling of self-confidence– seeing the former as stable and indestructible but the latter as something that may be weakened or strengthened. He sees this problem on three different levels: physical, psychological and spiritual.

One of the elements of those talks, showing their didactic and practical character is encouraging listeners to do some “exercises”.

E.g. if you want to, you can take out a piece of paper and write down why you are valuable. (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 343)

His talks are constructed in such a way that he uses examples from different representational systems: kinaesthetic, visual, auditory so various types of persons can find something that will make the communication suitable for their particular preferences. To be understood well, he uses examples of good music, beautiful paintings or tasty food or wine.

He appreciates the role of humour in everyday life and its importance in the value system. He talks about it a direct way.

“Shaping the self-esteem is helped by the sense of humor. It is a feature of humble people, as word *humor* is close to *humilitas* – being humble. It is about the ability to joke about your own life including your mistakes and errors. Being mature, aware of your value has a lot of humor – as experience shows, the higher the self-esteem, the better a sense of humor” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 376).

He is also a practitioner of humorous discourse (cf. Chłopicki and Brzozowska, 2017). One can notice it in the examples he uses to prove his point, especially when he constructs short dialogical exchanges, which are often ironical. His descriptions are frequently very vivid and detailed:

“God wants to play with us, throws us a ball, and we write an MA thesis: “The role of a ball in the concept of salvation after Vaticanum secundum”. God says: “The chap went bananas. Kick the ball, don’t write the thesis!” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 376).

Sometimes he creates the funny stories to illustrate his point:

Once, over the Sunday breakfast the husband, wife, children sit around the table. Suddenly the husband says: “My boss at work, she is a witch, a psychopath, everything falls apart as she doesn’t know how to manage things”. But the wife says: “Why have you invited her to our table on Sunday morning?” [...] “Let us not talk about your boss when we are all together”. Otherwise she is present during our Sunday breakfast and in the focus of all the family members – even dog sits and thinks: “This boss again”, food doesn’t taste good, even the bone is not tasty” (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 375).

5. Conclusions

Grzywocz's chapter on values could be perceived in the light of the theory of master tropes as proposed by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska (2013). Researching artistic language and imagination she defines megatropes 'as large figures that construe particular texts/discourses at a higher level of organization than just chains or clusters of overtly given macrotropes. [...] Macrotropes are figures of second-order, structuring the text in a covert, tacit way that needs to be recognized' (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2013: 35). The analysed text is full of interconnected microtropes that create the macrotropes. We can easily find examples illustrating each of ten master tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, simile - comparison, antithesis, catachresis, euphemism (understatement), suppression, hyperbole (exaggeration).

In the chapter we look for megatropes and ask the question: "What is this text really about?". It is definitely about humans and their ability to see (or not) how precious each of us is and how this knowledge is vital not only to appreciate but also to maintain life. It is a text about loving oneself as a value and through the values.

Krzysztof Grzywocz's style is very vivid – as he uses numerous examples, reported speech, parts of dialogues, questions, scientific descriptions. His resources include works of art, music, literature, detailed comments on everyday life. He uses academic style, with Latin terms and sentences, names and theories of psychologists, psychiatrists and theologians. His texts abound with positive valued adjectives. His way of writing is very inclusive, clear and convincing. He uses the figures of speech in their different functions (as named by Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2013, p. 133): not only "to domesticate, estrange and familiarize again the surrounding world" but also to "provide us with aesthetic pleasure [...] and a possibility of emotional reaction to the world" and to express their ludic potential (2013, p. 134).

Paradoxically, this highly elaborated text is logical and simple. He seems convinced about what he argues. He writes: "the highest joy is when the true things become obvious, and obvious ones become true" (Grzywocz, 2017, p. 291) and this remark applies to his own texts as well.

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