

Summary

This doctoral thesis is an attempt at a comprehensive reconstruction of the philosophical thought of Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936). In the work I justify that the English literary writer and apologist can be regarded as a philosopher who developed his own (partly eclectic, partly original) system. Chesterton was primarily a writer, but he was also a non-academic philosopher who expressed a variety of philosophical views in his essays. These are scattered. In the present work, I have attempted to bring them together and systematise them, arranging them according to the main disciplines of philosophy. These disciplines are as follows (corresponding to the following chapters of the thesis): epistemology, metaphysics, natural theology, philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, philosophy of man and social ethics. The first chapter is introductory in nature, characterising Chesterton himself and his philosophy.

Let us emphasise that the writer counted among philosophers. To confirm this, we can point to the fact that W. James quoted him at the beginning of his *Pragmatism*, as well as the fact that he was invited to a live discussion with B. Russell on the BBC. Chesterton was an extremely creative and versatile author as a writer, columnist and essayist. He wrote numerous novels and short stories, book introductions, plays, biographies, and produced poetry throughout his life. He wrote a total of more than 4,000 columns for several dailies. He edited his own weekly newspaper, *G.K.'s Weekly*, and his writings appeared in magazines such as *The Speaker*, *Illustrated London News*, *Daily News*, *Daily Herald*. In addition, he gave lectures, took part in public debates and was a highly regarded speaker on BBC radio. An important event in Chesterton's life was his conversion to the Catholic Church in 1922.

The method of work employed is to analyse Chesterton's writings in terms of the philosophical theses present in them. I have attempted to locate them and then summarise and comment.

The sources used in the work are mainly Chesterton's essays and columns and books treating worldview issues, mainly *Orthodoxy*, *The Everlasting Man*, *Heretics*, *What is Wrong with the World*, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, *St. Francis of Assisi*, as well as studies of his legacy by various authors. Of these, it is worth pointing to such items as J. Rydzewska's *G.K. Chesterton, Life and Thought*, and *Chesterton: Defender of the Faith*, W. Borowy, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton*. Of the English-language studies, of significance is the biography of the writer *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* written by M. Ward, and the study by the American author Q. Lauer's *Philosopher Without Portfolio*.

Of Chesterton's philosophical ideas, some are exceptionally valuable, and several have found continuators. I consider the following philosophical ideas of Chesterton to be the most important and original:

First, in epistemology and metaphysics, Chesterton combines common-sense realism with voluntarism. In the history of philosophy, the two orientations have often opposed each other. Chesterton succeeded in a unique synthesis of them.

Secondly, in natural theology, Chesterton proposed an original argument for the existence of God - the argument from gratitude. It represents an attempt to express the classical contingency argument in terms of objective metaphysical feelings. Chesterton's attempt can be debated, but its originality cannot be denied. Moreover, it must be admitted that Chesterton's argument may appeal more to the common man than the classical version.

Thirdly, in the philosophy of the Christian (Catholic) religion, Chesterton was the first to explicitly formulate the apologetic trilemma: Jesus was mad, bad, or God. This trilemma is wrongly attributed to C.S. Lewis. Chesterton, however, formulated it earlier and more convincingly. In doing so, he initiated a very interesting and still ongoing discussion that concerns not only the qualification of the person of Jesus, but also the logical problem of argumentation by enumerating and excluding possibilities.

Fourthly, as far as anthropology and philosophy of history are concerned, Chesterton is a representative of the anti-Enlightenment current of disbelief in progress. According to him, human history is not so much a line of growth as a wave of ups and downs, in which we move once closer to and once further away from the ideal. For Chesterton, the criterion for evaluating different cultural and ideological formations is Catholic orthodoxy. Chesterton's description of its persistence, despite attempts to destroy it intellectually, constitutes his most valuable contribution to the history of ideas and philosophy of history.

Fifth, Chesterton's original contribution to social philosophy was distributism. Preaching property for all, it opposed not only the real capitalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (private property for the few), but also socialism (the abolition of private property). Distributism has shared the fate of all "third way" programmes in economics, but as an ethical idea (private property is a right for everyone) it is still worth considering.