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Review: J. Merecki SDS, *Osoba i dobro. Szkice o teologii i filozofii osoby Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II* (Person and Good. Sketches on the Theology and Philosophy of Person According to Karol Wojtyła), John Paul II Institute, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2019, pp. 264

On the one hand, the statement that the reflection on man, his personal good and acting in the light and on the basis of truth is an absolute priority is a truism, on the other hand, it is a very current and extremely important postulate. This observation has a particularly rich historical resonance, but at the same time it is an articulation of the need for a profound and constantly repeated reflection on the most fundamental issues related to the anthropological as well as the ethical context of life and functioning of the human person. In spite of the great legacy of reflection on man, despite many attempts to interpret his essence, dignity, destiny and the dangers and deformations associated with it, a thorough philosophical and theological reflection in this area seems to be a fundamental task.

In the light of the above remarks, it should be stressed all the more that it is very beneficial that Rev. Dr. Hab. Jarosław Merecki SDS, a long-term student of Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Styczeń SDS who was a “direct student and friend” of Karol Wojtyła (p. 23), adds a new publication to an exceptionally proliferate scholarly output, mainly in the field of philosophical anthropology and ethics and an extremely valuable translations. This publication: *Osoba i dobro. Szkice o teologii i filozofii osoby Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II* (Person and Good. Sketches on the Theology and Philosophy of Person According to Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II) has been published as part of the works of the John Paul II

Institute, a meritorious institution. The new book includes seventeen scholarly articles previously published in renowned journals.

The book in question consists of three clearly composed parts. The first of them (entitled *Karol Wojtyła – filozof osoby* [Karol Wojtyła – the Philosopher of the Person]) presents a gamut of contents that reveals both the sources of Karol Wojtyła's anthropology – mainly its embedding in Thomism (here the primordial meaning of realistic metaphysics of St Thomas of Aquinas and the Lublin School of Classic Philosophy – pp. 39 ff) and phenomenology (mainly in the area of the use of methods and analyses connected with the understanding of human consciousness – pp. 25 ff) – as well as showing man in his spiritual-corporeal integrity, with accompanying dangers (the problem of alienation) and his final fulfilment. Therefore, the contents of this book bring closer and explain the shape, cogency and originality of anthropological and ethical personalism of Karol Wojtyła (pp. 48 ff).

Osoba i miłość (Person and Love) is the title that familiarizes us with the contents of another set of articles. They are initiated by a text devoted to the theology of the body and its philosophical background. A proper, personalistic understanding of human carnality allows us to treat it as a “sign of the person” (p. 96) and therefore, in the proper sense of the word, ennoble it as *sui generis* “sacrament of the person” (p. 104). Closely related to this issue is the question of the personal understanding of human sexuality (pp. 107 ff), which communicates the necessary relationship with love. In this analytic field the author also includes the issue of contraception as an “act” of the person(s) remaining in conflict with nature (p. 113). The reflections undertaken here combine the thought and teaching of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II with the message of Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. This research is complemented by a synthetic approach to the theology of matrimony and the family (p. 125), which includes such issues as the understanding of the person as a subject and a part of a community at the same time. Then there is the problem of “ontological difference” and “sex difference” (p. 131) and, against this background – consistently – again “sex difference” and transcendence “towards the third” (p. 134). The richness of this set of contents is further supported by reflection on the person and this dimension of a person's existence, which is the family (p. 139). The latter is presented here as “a community of persons open to bringing forth offspring,” that is, a community “which lives by the principle of the gratuitous and irrevocable gift” (p. 170). From this plan of reflection, which the “family pope” is making in his teaching (*ibidem*), it is concluded that it is an inalienable space of “human maturation and fulfilment” (pp. 171 ff). The family is a place to learn “to transcend oneself towards the truth,” the main one being “the truth about another” (p. 178).

The whole content of the reviewed item is closed by the part entitled *Człowiek wobec wartości* (Man in relation to values) (pp. 179 ff). At the beginning of this collection of articles there appears a text devoted to the ministry of John Paul II understood as the advocacy of “universal values” (p. 181), where (after the main message of the first encyclical *Redemptor hominis*) the first step is to draw the significant attention to the fact that man-person is “the way of the Church.” The person-oriented papal teaching at the centre of every step of its realization puts man himself, his natural and supernatural relationship with God, also in the area of social and political life.

Personalizm Jana Pawła II a rozwój nauki Kościoła o karze śmierci (John Paul II’s personalism and the development of the Church’s teaching on the death penalty) (p. 199) is yet another portion of the reflection submitted by J. Merecki, where the author points to a certain evolution in the field of considering the approach to conditions for applying or abandoning the death penalty. He shows this process on the example of John Paul II’s statements and changes in the provisions of subsequent editions of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The next text presented in this volume is once again a study of the issue of freedom, but this time in its strict correspondence to “truth and good” (pp. 209 ff). It is therefore an analysis of the “philosophy of the will” in the perspective of the “moral experience” (ibidem). Here, as in every area of reflection of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II, the personal character of “freedom of will” plays a key role (pp. 216 ff). It is also a convenient starting point for the next part of the contents, namely the analysis of “the truth as a political problem” (pp. 221 ff). A reliable and legitimate solution to this issue is again personalistic norm, that is “the truth about man as the foundation of the political order” (pp. 224 ff).

A *sui generis* added value of these contents are articles on anthropology and ethics of the direct master of Fr. J. Merecki – Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Styczeń SDS. The first of them is entitled *Osoba jako byt i norma. O antropologii ks. Tadeusza Stycznia SDS* (Person as an entity and norm. On the anthropology of Rev. Tadeusz Styczeń SDS) (pp. 237 ff) and contains comments on the anthropologically oriented personalism of the successor of Karol Wojtyła in the Chair of Ethics of KUL. The second one: *Etyka jako objawienie osoby. Kilka uwag o etyce ks. Tadeusza Stycznia SDS* (Ethics as a revelation of a person. A few remarks about the ethics of Fr. Tadeusz Styczeń SDS) (pp. 249 ff) is a synthetic presentation of the most important points of Rev. T. Styczeń’s scholarly and didactic path with an indication of the sensitive and original components of his ethical and anthropological thought.

In the light of the content elements quoted briefly, it should be stated that the book by Fr. Jarosław Merecki SDS is an excellent example of the realization

of the wise vision of philosophy, where the idea of the master-student relationship comes to the fore. The book essentially reveals the path of the personalistic thought of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II in its various dimensions and aspects, but at the same time it shows its continuation in the heritage of an outstanding student, Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Styczeń. Here again, it should be emphasized with great satisfaction that both the development and depth of the anthropological, ethical and pastoral genius of the Master as well as his creative reception in the writings and lectures of his Student are presented by an outstanding expert, continuator and populariser of the thoughts of both of them – Fr. J. Merecki.

Despite the seriousness and depth of the problems discussed here, the book is written in an extremely communicative and beautiful literary language. The added value of this publication is its erudite, didactic aspect substantiated by sources. Thus, it constitutes a reliable, documented and synthetic study of the thoughts of the most important and outstanding Polish personalists and, as such, is worth recommending to all people looking for and concerned about personal freedom, truth and good.