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THE END OF ‘PERSON’?

ABSTRACTS

From the Editors – The Weight... (P.M.)

The concept of ‘person,’ or the self-understanding of the human being as ‘person,’ is sometimes seen a burden. In his famous book *Reasons and Persons*,¹ Derek Parfit seems to express precisely this idea. Parfit endeavours to show that it is possible to describe the world and our life in it impersonally, i.e., without using the concept of ‘person.’ Such a description would be, in his view, closer to reality and thus better for us: not only would it give us a chance to feel significantly better (“I find the truth liberating and consoling. It makes me less concerned about my own future, and my death”²), but it would also draw our attention to others and bring us closer to them, helping us avoid mistakes in our rational efforts to do good. The concept of ‘person,’ which, according to the philosopher, should be abandoned, is expressed in the belief that we are “separately existing entities, apart from our brains and bodies, and various interrelated physical and mental events,”³ and that our identities are determinate and continue over time. Instead, “our existence just involves the existence of our brains and bodies, and the doing of our deeds, and the thinking of our thoughts, and the occurrence of certain other physical and mental events.”⁴

In a different context—that of a much less formalized reflection on culture than Parfit’s analytical discourse—Giorgio Agamben ponders over the self-understanding of contemporary man. A burden man feels as a result of seeing himself as ‘person’ is not the burden of an illusion; nor does the Italian philosopher think highly of the tendency to liberate oneself from ‘personal’ self-awareness. He describes the process of discarding it as a loss, as severing ourselves from the roots of the culture to which we are accustomed. It is mark of this culture that being a person within it coincides with a social recognition and a responsibility, and is also related to “the capacity of the individual to take on the social mask without ... being reduced to it.”⁵ The contemporary

¹ See Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

² *Ibidem*, 347.

³ *Ibidem*, 216.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Identity without the Person*, in: Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, transl. by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 52.

man experiences “the will to be freed from the weight of the person, from the moral as much as the juridical responsibility that it carries along with it.”⁶ The person ... is also the bearer of guilt, so the ethics implied is necessarily ascetic, since it is founded on a separation (of the individual from the mask, of the ethical person from the juridical person). It is against this separation that the new identity without the person asserts the illusion not of a unity, but of an infinite multiplication of masks. At the moment when individuals are nailed down to a purely biological and asocial identity, they are also promised the ability to assume all the masks and all the second and third lives possible on the Internet, none of which can ever really belong to them.”⁷ Convinced that the contemporary man must overcome his lethargy, Agamben does not summon him to return to the category of ‘person’ but “to search—beyond both personal identity and identity without the person—for that new figure of the human [...] for that face beyond the mask.”⁸

Although the cited authors regard the concept of person as a heavy burden, they do not fully appreciate its gravity, as neither of them reconstructs its meaning in a comprehensive way. It seems that it might actually be easier to understand who we are, if we abandon the concept of ‘person’ Parfit criticizes, while Agamben’s construal might be more difficult to forego.

Both interpretations—considered here as signals of certain characteristic phenomena in philosophy or, in a wider sense, in culture—ignore the metaphysical weight of the concept of person, the weight that is close to that of the concept of being. Persons “do not share personhood as a common attribute, in the way that human beings share humanity”⁹—writes Robert Spaemann, a contemporary theorist of personhood. “‘Person’ is not a classifier, but points to an *individuum vagum*, the unicity of an individual life. ‘Person,’ therefore, is an analogical concept, like ‘being’.”¹⁰ On this view, persons are all entities that possess their nature, that—metaphorically speaking—are capable of referring to their nature as to a role they play. According to the *operari sequitur esse* principle, they are rational, because they exist as persons. They are also living things. “Their being and their identity are the same as those of living creatures of any species. Yet they are grouped not in a species or a genus, but in a *community*, open in principle to those of other species, a community where each member occupies a unique and distinctive position entirely his or her own.”¹¹

Thus the weight of the concept of ‘person’ includes also the burden of an understanding of radically individual entities. Each of them refers to his or her nature in a unique way and, due to an intrinsic teleology of his or her being and his or her irreducible inner experience, constitutes a whole world. This weight is also sensed by those who make an effort of looking at every human being

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem, 52f.

⁸ Ibidem, 54.

⁹ Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something,’* transl. by Oliver O’Donovan (Oxford–New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), 68.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Ibidem, 4.

exactly in this adequate, i.e. radically individual way. Søren Kierkegaard writes: “The great thing about Socrates was that even when he was accused and faced the People’s Assembly, his eyes did not see the crowd, but only the individual.”¹² The Danish philosopher believed such a manner of perception to be available only to spiritually superior people, as ultimately it is the way God perceives man: “But in the eyes of God, the infinite spirit, all the millions that have lived and now live do not make a crowd, He only sees each individual.”¹³

Although the concept of ‘person’ emphasizes individuality, its weight comprises also the essentially communal nature of persons, their *a priori* openness to others. According to Spaemann, “persons exist only in the plural, that is as subjectivities mutually objective for one another.”¹⁴ The philosopher argues that in order to understand this kind of openness it is helpful to consider an exchange involving three parties rather than a dialogue between two persons. “Two persons can hold a conversation about a third one. They can make her—the subject—the object. They can debate what she meant and why she said something, but any moment she can open her mouth and interpret herself.”¹⁵ Indicating a paradigmatic character of the three-element relationship, Spaemann recalls the context in which the concept of ‘person’ was formed in Western culture, namely, the debate on the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In this way, the philosopher reveals a theological component of the weight the concept of ‘person’ carries.

In some interpretations, the concept of ‘person’ is seen as an expression of anthropocentric pride: such a self-understanding of man would make him into a burden for the environment he inhabits. Contrary to those interpretations, Spaemann—in the context of his proposal to rehabilitate the Aristotelian teleological approach to being—shows the innermost connection of the ‘person’ to the ‘rest of the reality.’ The basis of this connection is not only the actual similarities between persons and other living beings, but also the fact that man can perceive and understand this similarity. This manner of seeing the world, to use Spaemann’s terminology: the anthropomorphic perception of reality, prevents man from approaching animals as machines stimulated to action by external causes. Instead, they are looked at as dynamic wholes pursuing their own goals: “For living things there is a difference between right and wrong, between success and failure, between good and evil. It means that there is a fundamental similarity between everything that lives and ourselves. Nature is an object not only of our dominion, but also of our ‘being-with’ (‘Mitsein’).”¹⁶ Thus the burden related the concept of person becomes—for the person herself—the burden of responsibility for nature.

¹² *The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard*, transl. by Peter P. Rohde (New York: Citadel Press: 1988), 106.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Robert Spaemann, *Wirklichkeit als Anthropomorphismus*, in: *Grundvollzüge der Person. Dimensionen des Menschseins bei Robert Spaemann*, ed. Hanns-Gregor Nissing (München: Institut zur Förderung der Glaubenslehre, 2008), 21 (<http://www.denken-im-glauben.de/Downloads/9783936909098.pdf>). Translations mine.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 135f.

Eventually, the weight of the concept of person is the weight of her dignity, frequently described in terms of the goal and the means: “To recognize the dignity of man means to rank him higher than anything that comes from him in the visible world. All works and creations of man, crystallized in civilizations and cultures, make the world of mere means man uses to pursue the goal that is proper to him. Man lives not for technology, civilization or even culture; he lives, using them and preserving his own teleology. This teleology is closely related to the truth, since man is a rational entity, and to the good as the proper object of the free will.”¹⁷

The authors of the articles included in the present volume of *Ethos* demonstrate the weight of the concept of ‘person’ in detail: the weight that is both metaphysical and ethical, and related to a cognitive, existential and moral effort. They also show contexts in which the concept of ‘person’ might seem redundant or is rejected—just as in the case of like what is generally associated with the word ‘ballast’: a useless weight that may be, or sometimes must be, disposed of. What the authors share, however, is the—not always articulated—conviction or hope that the concept of ‘person’ will remain part of our culture, that it would continue to be seen as a ballast, but in a different meaning of the term. This meaning would have been immediately clear to those who did not create the concept of ‘person,’ but nevertheless laid the foundations for the reflection that engendered it. Ancient Greeks, a nation of shipbuilders, knew that without ballast a vessel could not maintain proper trim and sail safely, opposing the forces intent on overturning it.

JOHN PAUL II – The Transcendent Basis of Human Dignity and Human Rights

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Dean, Ambassador Joseph Amichia, has just voiced the respectful greetings that you wished to convey to me, as well as the sentiments evoked in you by the most notable aspects of the Holy See’s mission in the world. I thank most cordially for this. At the same time, I wish to express my gratitude to all of you who have desired to associate yourselves with his remarks.

It is also my pleasure to welcome the Ambassadors who have been recently accredited, as well as their staff members who have begun their duties in the course of the year just ended. Their experience will be invaluable for us all. We likewise hope that their experience will in turn be enriched by the Apostolic See’s views on international life.

For the Pope, the New Year meeting with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See is a special moment for reflecting on some of the major matters at stake in the world, matters for which you and he share a common concern.

¹⁷ Karol Wojtyła, *Człowiek jest osobą* [“Man Is a Person”], in: Karol Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz inne studia antropologiczne [“‘The Acting Person’ and Other Anthropological Studies”] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 418.

The Church's views on the challenges of our time are not always of course those of the nations. But the experience of centuries and the constant reference to the same values and ethical criteria make it possible for the views of the Holy See situated as they are above political, economic or strategic interests—to offer a point of reference to the impartial observer who seeks to broaden the basis of his judgments. For her part, the Catholic Church is convinced that she is serving humanity in accordance with the plan of her Founder when she endeavors to dispense freely the treasure of wisdom and doctrine which has been entrusted to her so that each generation can derive from it the light and strength needed to guide its choices.

The international community has a number of reasons to rejoice at the strengthening of detente between East and West, as well as the progress made in the area of disarmament, both on the bilateral level between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America with regard to strategic weapons, and on the multilateral level with regard to chemical weapons. On this subject, the Holy See hopes that the Conference being held in Paris on the banning of chemical weapons will bear lasting fruit.

The willingness to tackle with determination the question of reducing conventional weapons in Europe, shown by both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, allows us to think that soon the negotiators of the countries concerned will be duly mandated to define a common approach and to propose concrete measures and effective control mechanisms for the purpose of really freeing the peoples of Europe from the fear caused by the presence of offensive weapons and the possibility of surprise attacks.

In this context, the Holy See has followed with great interest the meeting of the Conference on European Security and Cooperation now taking place in Vienna, and it hopes that these efforts will be quickly concluded with a substantive and balanced final document which will take into account simultaneously the military, economic, social and humanitarian aspects of security, without which the 'old' continent cannot know lasting peace. Human rights and religious freedom have been the subject of detailed discussions in Vienna, and they should be given a prominent place in the future closing document of the meeting, which from this fact will be of special importance. The removal of obstacles which one has been able to note recently testifies to a growing awareness of the urgency which respect for these rights and this freedom and their effective exercise presents.

Let us hope then that the developments which have taken place recently in the Soviet Union and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe will help to create favourable conditions for a change of climate and for an evolution of national legislations, so as to move effectively from the stage of a proclamation of principles to one which guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person. Such a process in these countries should lead in particular to the emergence of a concept of religious freedom understood as a true civil and social right.

Looking beyond Europe, I would also like to mention a region racked by many years of endemic national and regional struggles, the peoples of which ardently desire a true and lasting peace. I refer to Central America. It is now more than

a year since the Heads of State of five countries signed the 'Esquipulas II' Accord, with a view to ending the sufferings of their peoples. The concepts of democratization, pacification and regional cooperation which are at the basis of this agreement ought to find an ever greater response among political leaders. We must hope then that all the interested parties will courageously resume the path of sincere and constructive dialogue, that the commitments provided for in the Accord—as for example the 'national commissions of reconciliation'—will be effectively implemented, and that the reinsertion of all political forces in the public life of these countries will be promoted.

The past year also very happily witnessed the beginning of a negotiated settlement of several conflicts in other regions. I am thinking first of all of the long awaited cease fire signed between Iran and Iraq. Their decision to begin talks under the aegis of the United Nations Organization is encouraging to the extent that these discussions foster dialogue and strengthen the desire for peace of the two parties.

In this regard, however, there is one aspect which I cannot pass over in silence: the return of the prisoners of war to their homelands. At the beginning of this New Year, which is an occasion everywhere for family reunions, how can we forget all those who have spent these holidays far from their loved ones? How can we fail to express the hope that the Authorities of these two countries, assisted by the competent International Organizations, will come to an agreement concerning the methods of repatriation, and thus shorten the sufferings of these men and give many families the joy of reunions so impatiently awaited?

Still further East, the effective withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan should be the prelude to an honourable solution enabling each interested party to promote a fresh stage in the reconstruction and development of that country. Initiatives and persevering efforts on the part of various countries—particularly the nations of South East Asia—permit us to hope for a comprehensive settlement of the problem of Cambodia, the population of which has been sorely tried for so many years.

Still in that same region, certain recent gestures by the Vietnamese Authorities—also with reference to religious matters—hold forth the promise of a readiness on the part of that noble nation to resume an increasingly fruitful dialogue in the concert of nations.

We must also express the wish that the necessary dialogue and understanding will promote a solution to the very complex Korean problem. In this sense the efforts of the Authorities involved deserve every encouragement.

It is also encouraging to think that the conflicts which have torn apart certain countries of Southern Africa will soon come to an end thanks to the Brazzaville Protocol and the New York Accord with a view to the process of independence for Namibia and the pacification of Angola. The inhabitants of these regions have suffered too cruelly for their fate to leave the international community indifferent. Finally, as the latest sign of 'good will,' I would like to mention the immense movement of solidarity manifested on the occasion of the tragic earthquake which occurred last December in Soviet Armenia. It is to be hoped that this solidarity which people are capable of showing in such tragic circum-

stances—a solidarity which transcends borders and political or ideological divisions—will increasingly become their common rule of action.

Unfortunately, however, causes for concern are certainly not lacking and somewhat dampen our confidence. In these last few days, tension in the Mediterranean has shown, yet again, how fragile the international equilibrium is.

I have repeatedly had occasion to express my dismay at the tragedy being experienced by Lebanon and to express the hope that the national unity of that country will be restored, in particular as a result of a reaffirmation of its sovereignty and at least through a resumption of the normal functioning of the institutions of the State. We cannot resign ourselves to seeing that country deprived of its unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. It is a question here of rights which are fundamental and incontestable for every nation. Once more, with the same conviction, before this authoritative assembly, I invite all countries friendly to Lebanon and her people to join forces in helping the Lebanese to rebuild, in dignity and freedom, the peaceful and exemplary homeland to which they aspire.

In this tortured region of the Middle East, new elements have recently appeared on the horizon of the destiny of the Palestinian people. They appear to favour the solution long recommended by the United Nations Organization, namely the right of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to a homeland. I also wish to express here my hope that the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is claimed by both these peoples as the symbol of their identity, can one day become a place of peace and a meeting place for each of them. This City, unique among all others, which evokes for the descendants of Abraham the salvation offered by the mighty and merciful God, should indeed become a source of inspiration for fraternal and persevering dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims, with respect for special characteristics and rights of each.

Nor can we forget certain of our brethren who in other parts of the world feel threatened in their existence or their identity. The difficulties which they find themselves facing are often complex and long-standing. The Holy See does not have the technical competence needed to resolve these serious questions, but it nevertheless considers it its duty to emphasize before his assembly that no principle, no tradition, no claim—however legitimate—gives authority to inflict upon peoples—all the more when they are made up of innocent and vulnerable civilians—repressive acts or inhuman treatment. It is a matter here of humanity's honour! In this context, I would recall the serious problem of minorities, which is the theme of my recent Message for the 1989 World Day of Peace: Not only individuals, but also peoples and human groups have rights, there exists "a right to a collective identity" (No. 3).

How could we resign ourselves to so many situations of distress when last 10 December marked the fortieth anniversary of the proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

This text, presented as "the common ideal to be achieved by all peoples and nations" (Preamble) has certainly helped humanity to become aware of its shared destiny and patrimony of values belonging to the whole human family. To the extent that it was meant to be 'universal,' this Declaration applies to all people in every place. Despite the hesitations, admitted or not, of certain States,

the 1948 text highlighted a set of ideas—imbued with the Christian tradition (I am thinking in particular of the notion of the dignity of the person)—which has become accepted as a universal system of values.

At the end of the excesses which had oppressed the human person at the hands of totalitarian regimes, the Paris Declaration sought to ‘protect’ man, whoever and wherever he may be. In order to avoid a repetition of the horrors which all of us can remember, it seemed essential that the inviolable sphere of the freedoms and faculties proper to the human person should in the future be protected from possible physical or psychological constraints which the political power might be tempted to impose on it. From man’s very nature there flows respect for the life, physical integrity, conscience, thought, religious freedom, and personal freedom of every citizen. These elements essential for each person’s existence do not represent a ‘concession’ by the State, which in fact only ‘recognizes’ these realities, which preexist its own juridical system, and the State has a duty to guarantee their enjoyment.

These rights are those of the person, who is necessarily a part of a community, since man is social by nature. The inviolable sphere of freedoms must therefore include those which are indispensable for the life of the family and communities of believers, which are society’s basic units. It is within them that this social dimension of man is expressed. It falls to the State to ensure that they receive adequate juridical recognition.

On the basis of these fundamental freedoms and rights, there develop, like concentric circles, the rights of man as a citizen, as a member of society, and more broadly as an integral part of an environment to be humanized. In the first place, civil rights guarantee a person his or her individual freedoms and oblige the State not to interfere in the sphere of the individual conscience in any way. Then there are political rights, which enable the citizen to play an active part in the public affairs of his own country.

Undoubtedly there is interaction and mutual conditioning between fundamental rights and civil and political rights. When the rights of the citizen are not respected, it is almost always to the detriment of fundamental human rights. The separation of powers within the State and democratic control are essential conditions for the effective respect of these rights. The fruitfulness of the notion of human rights is also manifested in the development and progressively more precise formulation of social and cultural rights. And the guaranteeing of these latter depends upon the extent to which their application is subjected to impartial verification. A State cannot deprive its citizens of their civil and political rights, even under the pretext of wishing to ensure their economic or social progress.

A right to development and to the environment are also beginning to be spoken of today. In this ‘third generation’ of human rights, it is often a question of demands which are still difficult to translate into binding juridic terms so long as no authority is capable of ensuring their application. But, in the end, all of this shows humanity’s growing awareness of interdependence with nature, whose resources—created for all, but limited—must be protected, especially through close international cooperation.

Thus, despite regrettable shortcomings, an evolution has taken place in favour of the elimination of arbitrariness in the relations between the individual and

the State. And in this regard, the 1948 Declaration represents a reference which cannot be disregarded, for it unequivocally calls upon all nations to organize the relationship of the person and of society to the State on the basis of fundamental human rights.

The idea of 'government by law' is thus seen to be implicitly required by the Universal declaration of Human Rights, and is in harmony with Catholic doctrine, for which the function of the State is to enable and help people to achieve the transcendent ends for which they have been destined.

Among the fundamental freedoms which the Church must defend, the first place naturally goes to religious freedom. The right to freedom of religion is so closely linked to the other fundamental rights that it can rightly be argued that respect for religious freedom is, as it were, a touchstone for the observance of the other fundamental rights.

The religious aspect, in fact, has two specific dimensions which show its originality in relation to the other activities of the spirit, notably those of conscience, thought or conviction. On the one hand, faith recognizes the reality of the Transcendence which gives meaning to the whole of existence and which is the basis of the values behaviour takes as its guidelines. On the other hand, religious commitment implies membership of a community of persons. Religious freedom goes hand in hand with the freedom of the community of believers to live according to the teachings of its Founder.

It is not for the State to pronounce on matters of religious faith, nor can it substitute for the various Confessions in matters of organizing religious life. The State's respect for the right to freedom of religion is a sign of respect for the other fundamental human rights, in that it is an implicit recognition of the existence of an order which transcends the political dimension of existence, an order which belongs to the sphere of voluntary membership of a community of salvation preceding the State. Even if for historical reasons a State accords special protection to one particular religion, it also has the obligation to guarantee religious minorities the personal and communal freedoms which flow from the common right to religious freedom in civil society.

Unfortunately this is not always the case. From more than one country there continue to arrive appeals from believers, notably Catholic believers, who feel oppressed in their religious aspirations and in the practice of their faith. Indeed it is not rare to find systems of legislation or administrative norms which obscure the right to religious freedom or which lay down such drastic restrictions as to have the effect of reducing to nothing the reassuring declarations of principle. On the present occasion, I appeal once more to the consciences of the leaders of the nations: there is no peace without freedom! There is no peace unless one finds in God the harmony of man with himself and with his fellowmen! Do not fear believers in any way! This is what I said last year on the occasion of the World Day of Peace: "Faith brings people together and unites them, makes them see others as their brothers and sisters; it makes them more attentive, more responsible, more generous in their commitment to the common good" (Message for the Celebration of the 1988 World Day of Peace, No. 3).

It has been rightly pointed out that the 1948 Declaration does not present the anthropological and ethical foundations of the human rights which it proclaims.

It is clear today that at that time such an undertaking would have been premature. It is thus the task of the various schools of thought—in particular the communities of believers—to provide the moral bases for the juridic edifice of human rights.

In this domain, the Catholic Church—and perhaps other spiritual families—has an irreplaceable contribution to make, for she proclaims that it is within the transcendent dimension of the person that the source of the person's dignity and inviolable rights is to be found, and nowhere else. By educating consciences, the Church forms citizens who are devoted to the promotion of the most noble values. Although the idea of 'human rights,' with its twofold claim to the autonomy of the person and of the rule of law, is in some way inherent in Western civilization marked by Christianity, the value upon which this idea rests, namely, the dignity of the person, is a universal truth destined to be accepted more and more explicitly in every cultural climate.

For her own part, the Church is convinced that she serves the cause of human rights when, with fidelity to her faith and mission, she proclaims that the dignity of the person has its foundation in the person's quality as a creature made in the image and likeness of God. When our contemporaries seek a basis upon which to establish human rights, they should find in the faith of believers and in their moral sense the indispensable transcendent foundations for ensuring that those rights are protected from all efforts at manipulation on the part of human powers.

One can see that human rights are not just juridical norms but first and foremost values. These values must be maintained and fostered in society, otherwise they also risk disappearing from the texts of the law. And so the dignity of the person must be protected in society before being protected by law. I cannot fail to mention here the disquiet caused by the poor use which certain societies make of this freedom so ardently desired by others.

When freedom of expression and of creation is no longer directed towards the search for the beautiful, the true and the good, but takes pleasure, for example, in the production of plays and films containing scenes of violence, cruelty or horror, such abuses, when frequently repeated, threaten the prohibitions of inhuman or degrading treatment sanctioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and bode ill for a future secure from a return to the excesses which that solemn document opportunely condemned.

The same is true when the faith and religious sensibilities of believers can be held up to ridicule in the name of freedom of expression or for propaganda purposes. Intolerance threatens to reappear in other forms. Respect for religious freedom is a criterion not only of the consistency of a juridical system, but also of the maturity of a free society.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, in closing I can only invite you to unite your daily efforts to those of the Holy See in order to meet the great challenge of the end of this century: to give back to man reasons for living!

As for the Church, she does not cease to be optimistic, for she is sure that she possesses a message which is ever new, received from her Founder, Jesus Christ, who is Life itself and who came among us, as the celebration of Christmas recently reminded us, so that people "may have life, and have it

abundantly” (Jn 10:10). She never tires of inviting all those who are willing to do so to meet this God who made himself ‘the neighbour’ of each of us and who suggests that we work, where we are and with our talents, in building a better world: a world in which people will live in friendship with the God who sets free and who brings happiness.

It is to him that I entrust in prayer the fervent good wishes which I formulate for all of you, as I invoke upon you, your families, your noble mission and your countries an abundance of blessings from on high.

Keywords: human dignity, human rights as values, international dialogue, international equilibrium, freedom of religion, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, individual freedoms, individual conscience, separation of powers within the State, democratic control, ‘third generation’ of human rights, government by law, civil society, peace, freedom

Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Vatican, 9 January 1989.

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Ks. Robert SKRZYPCZAK – ‘Person’—‘Substance’—‘Relation.’ Antonio Rosmini: A Forerunner of European Personalism

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The great intellectual and spiritual project undertaken by Antonio Rosmini was to build up a coherent and mature ‘truth-system’ which would embrace a synthesis of philosophical and theological thinking. According to Rosmini, the recognition of the human being as ‘person’ is feasible only within the *ordo essendi* (order of being). Rosmini considered the category of ‘person’ as the most significant accomplishment in the entire history of philosophy. Thus his own project focused on the precise definition of ‘person.’ He held that the person should constitute the highest principle regulating human actions. However, a fully grasp of Rosmini’s ideas involves a direct reference to the Christian conceptions relating the human person to the Three-Person God: The stronger the relation in which the person subsists, the stronger the person’s identity. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, who attributed the status of subsistent relations to the Divine Persons only, Rosmini proposed that the category of ‘subsistent relation’ should equally apply to the status of the human being as ‘person.’ Rosmini’s continuous efforts to appreciate the value of the human person resulted in his laying the foundations of personalism, which was in time developed by the succeeding generation of philosophers. The personalist approach worked out by Rosmini contributed not only to the origin of a possibly fullest definition of ‘person,’

but also to the realization that—in the ontological sense—the entire universe is focused on the person. Despite the fact that Rosmini never considered himself a pioneer of personalism, his accomplishments—in particular his idea that the new approach to intellectual research must make the person its main focus—make him the father of the personalist inspiration throughout Europe.

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Keywords: person, intelligent subject, subsistent relation, personalism, truth-system, intellectual love, new personality in Christ

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Katarzyna JASIŃSKA – *Praxis* as the Way to Know the Person and the Way of the Person's Fulfillment: The Thought of Karol Wojtyła as an Inspiration for Educators
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The starting point of Wojtyła's anthropology and ethics is the fact of 'man acting,' given in the phenomenological experience. In the metaphysical order the person precedes her actions, which was expressed in classical philosophy by means of the adage: *operari sequitur esse* (acting follows existence). In the epistemological order in turn an analysis of the subject's actions makes it possible to recognize her not only in the aspect of her existence, but also in the aspect of her nature as an acting subject. In this sense an analysis of human *praxis* underlies philosophical anthropology, revealing the spiritual nature of the person manifested through her actions.

Following St. Thomas Aquinas, Wojtyła considered a human act (*actus humanus*) as the core of human *praxis*. An action has consequences of two kinds. Its transitive consequences are objectified in its actual outward results, while its intransitive, enduring consequences remain within the acting person, introducing changes of moral nature in her. The article underscores the significance of the enduring consequences of an action for the moral growth (or moral degradation) of the person. A comparison of Wojtyła's conception of *praxis* with its Marxist interpretation shows that *praxis* actually manifests a personalist dimension. In this sense *praxis* turns out the ground on which humanity finds its accomplishment in accordance with the truth about the human being. Thus Wojtyła's anthropology, apart from expounding the truth about the human person, points to the significance of anthropo-*praxis*, namely to the fact that human actions need to be preformed with reference to the truth about things.

Education, which is a special kind of action, is focused on the accomplishment of the person's humanity. Personalist education, in which the student is approached as a rational and free person, should aim at enabling her to perform (morally good) actions and, through them, to accomplish her humanity.

Wojtyła's merit was to show that apart from attaining its facultative goals, *praxis*, due to the enduring consequences of the person's actions, determines her becoming (*fieri*) morally good. The latter goal, described in terms of the autoteleology of the person determines not only the meaning of education, but above all the fulfillment of the human life.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: person, Karol Wojtyła's concept of *praxis*, transitive and intransitive consequences of an action, fulfillment of the person, meaning of education

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Jaromir BREJDAK – To Be a Person: On the Anthropomorphic Dimension of the World

DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-05

Nature, happiness, and 'person' are the three vertices defining the field of Robert Spaemann's philosophical interests. Spaemann has extensively discussed these realities in his three major works: *Natürliche Ziele. Geschichte und Wiederentdeckung des teleologischen Denkens*, *Happiness and Benevolence*, and *Persons: The Difference Between "Someone" and "Something."* Spaemann holds that a teleological approach to life following its natural and autonomous goal, opens up the normative aspect of being in which the human person becomes co-responsible for the finality of other beings. The processual ontology developed by Spaemann concludes with the ethics that seeks to combine antiquity with Christianity: not only does it refrain from abandoning the concept of human happiness as the goal of life, but it expands this ancient idea by introducing the Christian concepts of love and benevolence as the sources of genuine happiness. Benevolence and responsibility are possible beyond the natural egocentric self-centeredness. Owing to the transgression of her ego the human being in a 'natural' way transcends her own nature, thus becoming a 'person.'

Keywords: nature, teleology, happiness, responsibility, benevolence, person

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Tadeusz KOBIERZYCKI – Can a Person Exist? Me and Personality: Disintegration and Transcendence

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Within the dynamic theory put forward by Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1902-1980) personality is given and set in the plane of immanence: personality is developing. This growth is conditioned by the fact that personality is characterized by transcendence potentials. It is these potentials that allow personality to overcome its ontological deficits which arise in situations of: birth, development, deficiency, disintegration, crisis, and sickness, even death. It is by the power of transcendence that personality is protected against total disintegration. This power may be identified with the force of life, health, resurrection, and even salvation. A psychosomatic being strives towards the physically unconditioned and thus towards the metaphysical. In order to provide a complete picture of the theory of personality—conceived of as a form of human being—it is indispensable to consider the most important positions in philosophy and psychology related to the analysis of existence.

Keywords: I, personality disintegration, transcendence, existence

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Filip MAJ – “All we are is a melody.” Henri Bergson’s Conceptions of Personality, Self and Creativity as Forms of Subjective Being

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The paper is an attempt to reconstruct Bergson’s conception of self and personality in the perspective of his conception of creative evolution. The concepts of self and personality in Bergson’s philosophy play the role of connecting and separating objective and subjective human acts. The former characterize the evolutionary unification of ‘duration’ and ‘development’ as well as the conflict between what belongs to the species and what is individual, while the latter have a subjective character and may be described as processes of creative freedom. Bergson’s conception of two selves (superficial and deep) is analyzed as corresponding to his twofold conception of creativity: the evolutionary and the creationary.

Keywords: personality, self, creative evolution, inclinations, freedom

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Joanna TRZÓPEK – The Person: (Still) A Problem or (Already) a Backstreet of Modern Psychology?

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The concept of ‘person’ as distinct from those of ‘human being’ or ‘individual’ is practically absent from modern scientific psychology, since it takes its roots from philosophical anthropology. In psychology, the concept of ‘person’ has marked its presence merely in the non-naturalistic currents, such as humanistic psychology or existential psychology. The article is inspired by the conceptualization of ‘person’ in the latter, in particular in the work of Carl Rogers and Viktor Frankl. In the course of the paper these two—fairly different—understandings of ‘person’ are studied against some aspects of the modern mainstream psychology, namely, personality psychology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and neuroscience. As a result of the scrutiny some significant questions arise related, on the one hand, to the possibility of such a redefinition of ‘person’ which would enable a use of the concept in the empirical research conducted within the naturalistic approach. On the other hand, however, the redefinition in question must not involve elimination of the most essential contents of the concept of ‘person.’

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: person, self-regulation, moral phenomenology, automatic processes, controlled processes

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Robert POCZOBUT – The category of a person in the context of cognitive science

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The category of ‘person’ is one of the fundamental notions of ethics and philosophical anthropology. In recent years, works in broadly construed cognitive science have also been published which take up the topic of the personal dimension of man. This raises a number of questions: Do the research methods of cognitive science allow us to analyze the personal level of organization of cognitive systems? And if so, what concept of a person do these methods imply? Do research results in cognitive science confirm ‘the death of the person’? In this article, I try to show that although the progress in cognitive science compels us to revise some basic commonsensical and philosophical categories, such as those of the mind, consciousness, cognition and free will, it does not lead to a straightforward elimination of the notion of a person. However, cognitive science does enable us to discover the subpersonal (neurocomputational)

mechanisms underlying the processes characteristic of the personal dimension, which in a sense leads to the naturalization of the concept of a person.

Keywords: person, cognitive science, consciousness, cognitive mechanisms, emergence, reduction, eliminationism

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Kazimierz KRZYSZTOFEK – What Becomes of a Human Individual in the Twenty First Century? Questions and Hypotheses

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The author scrutinizes two issues concerning the condition of the human being in the period of post-industrial social change incorporating, in particular, the digital turn. Firstly: To what extent a twenty first century human being still is—or has a chance to be—a person in the sense worked out by philosophy, anthropology and other social sciences, namely, a being which is distinct from the worlds of objects and nature? Secondly: What becomes of the human individual as a social being, and to what extent does a human individual still preserve her social nature? Can we still speak of a human society, or should we rather be speaking about threats to its very existence? Are we still dealing with a society, or rather with an unspecified post-society whose members are both human and non-human actors? The author focuses on the latter aspect of the problem, addressing above all the question of who *homo digitalis* is.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: person, individual, individualization, individuation, post-modernity, digital turn

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Grzegorz HOŁUB – A ‘Passing’ of the Human Being? From Embodiment to the Virtual

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The article discusses the issue of a possible ‘passing’ of the human being. The starting point of the considerations is the postulate, put forward by radical

environmental philosophers, to ‘liberate’ the natural world from the presence of the human being. Their idea may be accomplished by transferring humanness to virtual and technological spheres, as proposed by transhumanists. The author points out to various practical and theoretical problems involved by such an enterprise. Generally speaking, the latter would lead to the annihilation of both the human being and the human culture. While the virtual and technological domains may be helpful to humans, they fail to provide the environment where humanness—in the form familiar to us right now—could be constituted. The postulate to transfer humanness outside the biological domain stems from the ongoing ecological crisis as well as from the recognition that the human being is a threat to the natural world. However, the author points out to the need to adopt the ‘two-winners’ logic (regarding both humans and the environment as winners) rather than the ‘winner and loser’ one.

Keywords: biocentrism, transhumanism, human person, enhancement of the human nature, the virtual sphere

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Fr. Marcin FERDYNUS – Designing Persons? On Depersonalisation of the Human Being in Modern Transhumanism

DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-12

Achievements of biomedical science allow us to interfere with human nature to a larger extent than ever before. Supporters of such activities, especially transhumanists, hold that technological progress determines an inevitable direction of such interference and all doubts related to biomedical improvement of the human being lack sufficient grounds. The article considers whether the transhumanist demand for a transformation of the human being into the ‘post-human’ being involves depersonalisation. The conducted analyses show that in the case of transhumanism we would be dealing with twofold depersonalisation of the human being: firstly, the transhumanist postulates jeopardize the attitude of unconditional love, which is the only proper attitude towards the human person, and, secondly, they objectify human life, which as such is unobjectifiable.

Keywords: depersonalisation, transhumanism, human nature, biomedical enhancement

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Jan WADOWSKI – In Pursuit of Adequate Anthropology: Difficulties and Postulates
DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-13

The main aim of the paper is to discuss the issue of adequate anthropology. Philosophical anthropology as a scholarly discipline developed in 20th century, but soon it lost its vivacity. A majority of the contemporary concepts of the human being may be described as reductionist. The subsequent application of such reduced models in the social life has contributed to an increase in dysfunctions and pathologies. As a result the human being experiences various forms of alienation and estrangement.

The so called ‘problem of man’ calls for multidimensional analyses. The author postulates that while a focus on ethics and axiology is certainly important, the actual basis of the future integral anthropology should be universal spirituality. This kind of discourse, however, would involve going beyond the first, the second and the third person perspectives. Elaboration of a universal and metacultural category of humanity, one based on a holistic model of spirituality, seems essential.

Humanity comprises capability of participating, in a dialogical way, in spiritual values. The ultimate need is then to create a non-arbitrary and impartial philosophy of the human being capable of generating a grand narrative for the whole planet.

Keywords: adequate anthropology, reductionism, humanity, spirituality, grand narrative

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Sławomir BOBOWSKI – A Demythologization of Jesus? The Anti-Gospel According to José Saramago

DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-14

The dispute over Jesus, which is also a dispute over the existence of the sacred reality, has continued since the age of Enlightenment. The very first works intended to demonstrate that Jesus was a merely historical figure were created in the early nineteenth century. Until now, thousands of books have been published all over the world proving the validity of this claim, and other thousands in order to abolish it. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the ‘debate’ in question was transferred to the domain of literary fiction. Side by side with novels intended to evangelize the readers, such as Jim Bishop’s *The Day Christ Died* (1957), there appeared several novels engaging in a polemic with the Gospel tradition, some of them even meant to compromise it. Among them is

José Saramago's *The Gospel According To Jesus Christ* (1991), an openly secular novel, only subtly, however, undermining the sacred tradition. The author succeeds in pointing to some of its weaknesses (or quasi-weaknesses), such as: (1) the inaccuracy of the message of the Gospel, (2) the overtly oppressive attitude of Christianity towards sexuality, hindering the recognition of one's own identity (in the case of the novel the person suffering this oppression is Jesus), (3) too rigid a separation of good and evil, which is perceived from the secular, rational-empirical perspective as artificial and incompatible with the liquid, free-floating reality lacking sharp boundaries. The fictional Jesus rebels against God, the Father, and, discouraged by numerous 'fallibilities' of the divine project, refuses to carry his yoke. However, having focused on the personal growth of his protagonist, on his quest for freedom and self-fulfillment, the author ignores the most significant elements of the story of Jesus, namely, the call for mercy, the commandment to love one's neighbor, and the call not to be focused on oneself.

Keywords: historical Jesus, Jesus of the Gospels, the sacred, atheism, theism, novel, freedom, self-fulfillment, mercy, love

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Lilianna DORAK-WOJAKOWSKA – Man and Object in Józef Szajna's Theatre Work

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The paper is an attempt to describe the complex relations between the actor and the object in Józef Szajna's theatre work. In Szajna's art, the human being is subject to reification and is approached as an object. However, in the case of Szajna's theatre, one can also speak about the opposite phenomenon, namely, inanimate objects getting attributes of living beings: an object would frequently become animated and personified. Szajna was interested in how a human being becomes a mechanism, or an object, and how a human being can animate an object. Thus he focused on the special relation obtaining between the actor and the object (or the actor and the mannequin). As a stage artist, Szajna would often deal with assemblages of human and object characteristics. In his work, an object, introduced onto the stage and marked by destruction, would suddenly reveal human characteristics. In his plays, the actor existed on the verge of his traditionally understood stage existence. The actor's body, subjected to unnatural shaping (moulding) would bond with the expression of an object. The continuous juxtaposition of objects with animate beings pictured the interpenetration of extreme experiences of life, thus pointing to the coexistence and mutual interaction of organic and inorganic matter in its various dimensions, and with a varying intensity. The actor, treated as equal to the surrounding

objects, was made to clearly understand her mission and the reason for her presence on the stage, namely, her participation in a collective morality play exhibiting a humanizing vision of the world.

Keywords: Józef Szajna, theatre, actor, object, mannequin, reification

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Joanna WOJNICKA – A Beguine in Modern Europe: On Bruno Dumont’s *Hadewijch*
DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-16

The article focuses on *Hadewijch*, a film by the French director Bruno Dumont. The film is discussed from the perspective of the contemporary religious experience. Bruno Dumont, one of the most interesting French directors, refers in his movie to the tradition of Robert Bresson. The protagonist of *Hadewijch*, a contemporary girl fascinated by the medieval mystic Hadewijch, experiences her religiousness in a world completely devoid of any metaphysical context. Her loneliness draws her near the circles of Islamic terrorists. Dumont’s ambiguous movie poses numerous questions and while it does not offer an unequivocal answer to any of them, it succeeds in providing a painful diagnosis of the condition of contemporary Western Europe.

Keywords: *Hadewijch*, Bruno Dumont, Robert Bresson, Hadewijch, contemporary mysticism, contemporary religiousness, Christian spirituality, Islam

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Zofia ZARĘBIANKA – On the Beauty that Equals Mercy: The Conceptions of Mercy in Karol Wojtyła’s Play *Our God’s Brother*, as seen in the context of John Paul II’s Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*
DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-17

The article presents a comparative analysis of the conceptions of mercy put forward in two texts by Karol Wojtyła–John Paul II, namely in his play *Our God’s Brother* and in the Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*. The existing interpretations of *Our God’s Brother* tend to disregard its theological aspects and focus on the biographic and historical issues instead. The author proposes a different approach to the reading of Wojtyła’s play and holds that its theological aspects, in particular the reference to the category of mercy, are crucial to

its interpretation. A comparison of the ideational layer of the play with that of the encyclical in question leads to the conclusion that the most significant ideas present in *Dives in Misericordia* were expressed—in a non-discursive way—in the play *Our God's Brother*, which preceded the encyclical by thirty years. This discovery confirms the axiological and ideational unity of the Polish Pope's entire output, as well as the rightness of those who have pointed that Wojtyła's literary works must be considered in terms of a 'laboratory of thought' which prepared the ground for his later writings making use of genres other than literary.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: drama play, mercy, encyclical, *Our God's Brother*, *Dives in Misericordia*

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Piotr ŚLĘCZKA SDS – A Compromise—or a Lie? A Voice in the Controversy over the Scope of Legislation on Human Life Protection in Poland

DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-18

In the fall of 2016, it became apparent that the civil initiative to widen the extent of legal protection of the lives of the unborn will not find a political support from the members of the Polish Parliament. The public debate on the 'permissible' scope of abortion in Poland involved debates among publicists, journalists, and politicians, but also certain Catholic philosophers, in particular ethicists, among them Fr. Alfred Wierzbicki. However, Fr. Wierzbicki's thesis that a 'wise' law will leave the decision as to whether the life of an unborn child should continue to the child's mother, is rendered impossible within personalist ethics. The paper embraces a polemic with Fr. Wierzbicki's view and advances a criticism of the 'argument to moderation,' put forward by the proponents of preserving unchanged the 1993 legal regulation which made it possible to perform abortion under certain circumstances. The nexus of the criticism thus formulated is the twofold (logical and ethical) analysis of the law-making procedures accepted by the Polish Parliament. As it turns out, it is precisely these procedures that make it impossible for its pro-life members to cast their votes on the issue of 'permissibility' of abortion in a way that would enable them to manifest their axiological standpoint in a coherent way, and thus to follow their consciences.

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Agnieszka LEKKA-KOWALIK – On the Consequences of the Ambiguity of the Term ‘Personal Identity’: Some Remarks on Grażyna Osika’s Book *Tożsamość osobowa w epoce cyfrowych technologii komunikacyjnych*

DOI 10.12887/29-2016-4-116-19

In her book Grażyna Osika discusses some contexts of developing communication society, the nature of digital technologies, conceptions of identity and the impact of digital technologies on personal identity. On this basis Osika develops a communication model of personal identity. Yet her policy of ignoring metaphysical issues and confining philosophy to the philosophy of mind becomes a source of interpretational problems. Firstly, it is sometimes difficult to determine of what Osika writes: the real identity of a person, the view one has of oneself, a personal experience of one’s identity, the creation of one’s personal identity, the factors that influence one’s identity, the term ‘personal identity’ or the concept of personal identity. The book is in fact about the impact of digital technologies on the process of creating one’s own identity in the sense of acquiring/removing certain personal traits. This is what the communication model refers to. Secondly, Osika stresses that the starting point of creating one’s own identity is the experience of one’s own existence and that the ‘I exist’ experience enables various constructions of oneself. However, Osika does not take into consideration the implications of Piotr Oles’s distinction she herself quotes: who I am (the realm of metaphysics) and what I am (the realms of psychology, sociology, etc.). While it is true that I can construct myself and that I am influenced by the technologies as well as by the environment, it is so only in the aspect of my traits. As far as my essence is concerned, I am not free to construct myself. I am not a tiger, or a bird, but a person—a rational and free being with potentialities. And it is only such understanding of the human person that may provide the foundations for Osika’s communication model of personal identity. Thus, in order to ultimately justify Osika’s claims, one needs to refer to classical metaphysics.

Keywords: person, identity, personal identity, communication society, digital technologies, communication model of personal identity, classical metaphysics

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Adam F. BARAN – Invincible: On Jan Rodowicz codename: Anoda

The article focuses on the profile of Jan Rodowicz codename: Anoda, one of the heroes of the Polish Underground State during World War II and a soldier in the Warsaw Uprising. During the war Rodowicz took part in the historic Operation ‘Arsenal’ and also in numerous other operations against Nazi Germany occupying Poland, organized by the Grey Ranks and the Home Army.

The author presents Rodowicz’s biography, as seen in the light of the newest publications on the history of the period. Apart from highlighting Rodowicz’s heroic actions during the war, the author tells the story of his life after the war, including his imprisonment by the communist security services and his death, the circumstances of which have remained unknown until today.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: Jan Rodowicz codename: Anoda, scouting, Grey Ranks, Operation ‘Arsenal,’ Aleksander Kamiński, the Polish Underground State, Battalion Zośka, Battalion Parasol, Warsaw Uprising, Home Army, Henryk Kozłowski codename: Kmita, Barbara Wachowicz

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Patrycja MIKULSKA – Personalism and Stereotypes

Review of Justyna Melonowska’s *Osob(n)a: Kobieta a personalizm Karola Wojtyły Jana Pawła II. Doktryna i rewizja* [“The ‘Separate’ One: The Woman and the Personalism of Karol Wojtyła–John Paul II: The Doctrine and a Revision”], Warszawa: Difin, 2016.

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Robert T. PTASZEK – “The human being cannot lose her place in this world”

Review of *Europa i jej antropologia polityczna. Człowiek jako droga historii – o filozofii Karola Wojtyły* [“Europe and Her Political Anthropology: The Human Being is the Way of History – On the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyła”], ed. by Christoph Böhr and Christian Schmitz, Warszawa: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2016.

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Fr. Sławomir NOWOSAD – Ecological Transfiguration

Review of *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature and Creation*, ed. by John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

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Patrycja WŁODEK – The Sins of Colonialism

Review of Krzysztof Loska's *Postkolonialna Europa. Etnoobrazy współczesnego świata* ["Postcolonial Europe: Ethno Images of the Contemporary World"], Kraków: Universitas, 2016.

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Mariusz ZEMŁO – Where is Religiousness Headed in Modern Times?

Review of Janusz Mariański's *Megatrendy religijne w społeczeństwach ponowoczesnych. Studium socjologiczne* ["Religious Megatrends in Postmodern Societies: A Sociological Study"], Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2016.

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Adam FITAS – From Gods to Celebrities, or The Idol in Culture

Report on a National Scholarly Conference "The Idol in Culture," John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin, 12 May 2016.

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Marek WÓDKA – Philosophical Anthropology Facing the European Crisis

Report on a Symposium "Anthropological Foundations of the Social Order, according to John Paul II," John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin, 24 Oct. 2016.

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Mirosława CHUDA – A Reader-Errant

The author refers to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in order to address apparent 'dangers' of being addicted to reading.

Keywords: addiction, literature, literary fiction, Don Quixote, St. Teresa of Ávila

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Maria FILIPIAK – Philosophy of ‘Person’

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A Bibliography of Addresses by John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis from 1978 to 2016.

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