

BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY *ETHOS*

*The Lublin School of Philosophy: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jacek Wojtysiak, Zbigniew Wróblewski, and Arkadiusz Gut, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, e-book, forthcoming in 2020.

In the history of philosophy, the after-war period brought a rapid development of the currents of thought known today as existentialism, philosophy of dialogue, personalism, and analytic philosophy. The ideas proposed by their representatives profoundly shaped Western culture of the period and, to this day, have not ceased to inspire it. However, in the wake of the political division of Europe after the Second World War and the existence of the Iron Curtain, which effectively blocked not only the flow of people, but also the spreading of ideas, the contact between Western intellectuals and their peers in Eastern and Central Europe was largely reduced. The ideas developed in Poland and in the other countries of the Soviet Bloc did not have much chance to become part of the European collective consciousness, let alone ‘compete’ with the main intellectual trends of the time. With Marxism officially considered as the political doctrine conveying the ultimate explanation of the history of culture, as well as the only ‘adequate’ anthropology, the situation of philosophers in Central and Eastern Europe was particularly difficult. The ideological pressure prevented free research in the field of the humanities, and the ubiquitous censorship impeded unrestricted exchange of thought. In that situation, an ‘oasis’ of intellectual freedom behind the Iron Curtain was the Catholic University of Lublin, the only nonpublic institution of tertiary education which was simultaneously a research center. Throughout the communist period its professors were not infrequently persecuted, whereas its graduates were not welcome employees in state owned enterprises. Despite all the adversities—or maybe to defy them—the philosophers from the Catholic University of Lublin began a close cooperation involving common pursuit of the most acute philosophical issues of the time, not the least of them being the need for a theoretical debate with Marxism in the field of anthropology and social theory.

The authors of the articles comprised in *The Lublin School of Philosophy: A Comparative Perspective* present the history and a detailed theoretical account of the development of the philosophical theory at the Catholic University of Lublin, pointing out that the coherence of the conducted research, as well as the consistency of the methodology employed by the Lublin philosophers (which was not insignificant in the case of the debate with Marxism) indeed makes it possible to consider the output of the Lublin philosophers in terms of a 'school' of classical, or realist, philosophy.

Among the philosophers who may be regarded as the founders of the Lublin School were Stefan Swieżawski (historian of philosophy), Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec (metaphysician), Jerzy Kalinowski and Stanisław Kamiński (logicians and methodologists), and Karol Wojtyła (ethicist). All of them believed in the primary role of the history of philosophy and of logic in both developing and teaching philosophy. They also considered metaphysics (the theory of being) as the central discipline, and worked out the doctrine of existential Thomism: an original (while coinciding with the conceptions proposed by Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain) interpretation of the thought of Thomas Aquinas. The research objectives of the Lublin philosophers embraced a new rendition of the most important issues of classical philosophy in dialogue with modernity and with the awareness of both the potential and the limitations of science as such, and of natural sciences, in particular. Despite the modifications of the above outlined project in the course of its advancement, the Lublin School of Philosophy has significantly influenced Polish philosophy of the late 20th century, as well as worked out an interesting basis for the Christian outlook. It was owing to the Lublin scholars and their methodology distinguishing science from philosophy, on the one hand, and from religion, on the other, that the autonomy of philosophy as a natural insight was clearly demonstrated, and Poles received an intellectual alternative to Marxism and scientism, propagated by the official ideology of the State.

The present book is an attempt to compare the output of the Lublin School of Philosophy with that of the chosen philosophical schools or currents of thought of the turn of the 21st century. The opening part of the volume comprises a comparison of selected issues developed by Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec and his students within their conception of metaphysics with debates on similar issues continued in analytic philosophy, on the one hand, and in contemporary Thomism, on the other.

The second part of the book embraces a discussion of the disciplines scrutinized in the Lublin School by Antoni Bazyli Stępień, that is, epistemology, philosophical psychology (known today as the philosophy of mind), and aesthetics, as well as their comparison to the parallel concepts developed by Roman Ingarden in his phenomenological theory. The authors point also to the similarity between Stępień's understanding of the object of philosophical psychology and that of today's cognitivism.

The third part of the book includes methodological reflection on the foundation of the sciences (and human knowledge as such), and analyzes the output of Stanisław Kamiński in the fields of metaphilosophy and semiotics. The authors demonstrate that certain issues brought up by Kamiński (e.g., the multidisciplinary approach, the integration of sciences, and definition as a statement of the

meaning of the word) are now addressed by the philosophy of science and the philosophy of language.

The concluding part of the book comprises an analysis of the philosophy of nature (which combines traditional natural philosophy with modern cosmology), as understood by philosophers from the Lublin School. Interestingly, a majority of those pursuing philosophy of nature were not existential Thomists, but followed the Thomism of the Louvain School or developed their views outside Thomism, for instance, by ‘philosophizing in the context of science.’

The value of the book lies in that it presents the so far unknown output of the Lublin School philosophers to international readers, on the one hand filling the gap caused by the fact that the philosophy in question was developed behind the Iron Curtain and, as such, largely inaccessible to Western European public. On the other hand, the volume proposes a comprehensive philosophical approach to the understanding of man and culture which may be considered as alternative to the ones prevailing in the postmodern era. We recommend the book to contemporary philosophers, in particular to those interested in the specificity of existential Thomism and in the history of the philosophy developed behind the Iron Curtain, but also to philosophy students, who may find in it a comparative history of this discipline, as seen from the perspective of the late 20th century.

*D. Ch.*

*The Lublin School of Philosophy: History—Conceptions—Disputes*, ed. Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik and Paweł Gondek, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, e-book, forthcoming in 2020.

The recommended volume scrutinizes the specificity of the problems, as well as the particular issues, studied in the Lublin School of Philosophy in the mid- and late 20th century. The Lublin philosophers were, on the one hand, involved in systematic philosophical investigations, but, on the other, they were engaged in the inevitable controversy with the Marxist ideology officially prevailing in Poland at the time. Interestingly, Marxism, as well as existential Thomism developed by the Lublin School, emphasized the significance of philosophy both to an individual human existence and to social life as such. They differed, however, in the interpretation of this significance and in the concept of the human person each of them, respectively, entailed. While the Lublin philosophers stressed that philosophy needs to be based on a faithful reading of reality, in particular of the reality of the human being, and considered such a reading as normative, Marxists would not grant philosophy an autonomy and treat it as a tool helpful in their attempt to introduce global political change. Thus the concept which was at the core of the controversy was that of truth: the truth-based vision of reality and truth-inspired actions. No wonder that the view that philosophizing is a moral task, and philosophy, in its nature, manifests the self-awareness of culture collided with that of philosophy conceived as instrumental in the struggle for a classless society.

The articles collected in the volume are written by the Lublin School scholars of the second and third generation, many of them having had an opportunity

to collaborate with the thinkers who originally created the intellectual center in question, such as, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, Karol Wojtyła, Jerzy Kalinowski, Stefan Świeżawski, and Stanisław Kamiński.

In her "Introduction," Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik states that the book has three main objectives: (1) it provides a historically based overview of persons and concepts which made up the phenomenon of the Lublin School of Philosophy; (2) it identifies hitherto unsolved or new problems and, as such, invite the reader to 'philosophize' together with the Lublin thinkers; and (3) it is supposed to inspire tools for further research on the output of the Lublin School of Philosophy and on its 'paradigm of philosophizing.' The papers the volume compiles are followed by photographs from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin Archive.

Among the issues the particular articles discuss are the history of the Lublin School of Philosophy, the social and intellectual context in which it emerged, the phases of its development, its relation to the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions, its contribution to Polish and global culture, and, in particular, to overcoming communism in Poland. The method of philosophizing specific to the Lublin School has been analyzed and described as a realistic approach involving strict methodological tools, inspired by the accomplishments of the earlier Lvov–Warsaw School, and resulting in a consistent, methodologically homogenous philosophical project valid to this day. In the historical perspective, the realistic metaphysical philosophy it developed belongs to the train of *philosophiae perennis* (perennial philosophy). As such, the Lublin School philosophy opposes idealism, which it sees as the root of the present crisis of culture and rationality. A special consideration has been given to the specificity of the Lublin personalism, which combines contribution from thinkers as different as Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec and Karol Wojtyła, thus expressing the openness of the School to insights from metaphysics as well as from moral philosophy and ethics. In a separate article, the language of the theory of being (metaphysics) has been analyzed, pointing to the significance of existential judgments rather than to conceptualization. The scrutiny of the methods of making philosophy in the School shows in turn its methodological sources. Basic methodological tools used in the Lublin School are discussed, among them metaphysical separation as the method of formulating the notion of being, decontradictifying explanation (i.e., finding such an explanation which cannot be refuted unless the explained facts are denied), non-refutable justification, analysis of the possible existence of truths which are at the same time factual and necessary, negative justification and its types; delineating the space for hypotheses in the theory of being, and historicism. The place and significance of logic, in particular for the theory of being, ethics, and philosophy of nature (as advanced in the Lublin School) have been analyzed with the special focus on the logical foundations for practical cognition and the logic of norms.

An interesting part of the book is the article analyzing the disputes and controversies among the Lublin scholars which were continued over the years. Although the Lublin academics adopted the same paradigm of philosophy, they held numerous debates within this paradigm, some of them long-lasting. Among the controversial issues which inspired polemics were: the scope of the application of the phenomenological method and its efficacy in attaining the defined objectives of philosophizing; the status of epistemology and its relation to

metaphysics (the issue of what philosophical discipline should be considered as ‘the first philosophy’), the cognitive object of moral philosophy and the primary norm for morality (*bonum est faciendum* or *persona est affirmanda?*), the object and purpose of metaphysics, the status of the philosophy of nature, the understanding of classical philosophy, the applicability of formal logic to classical philosophy, the role of direct experience and existential judgments in developing metaphysics, and problem of the existence and nature of intentional objects.

Last but not least, the book includes a separate article on the Lublin School of Philosophy as a cultural phenomenon, discussing its specificity and rootedness in Polish culture and the Polish tradition of scholarly debate. The School in question is described in terms of a community of academics, but also one of friends and colleagues, to whom philosophical work meant more than a career and who were ready for sacrifices in order to be able to continue their pursuit of the value of truth.

The volume is addressed to philosophers, in particular those pursuing the study of culture, and to students of philosophy, but also to readers interested in the intellectual history of Poland and, more generally, in the history of academic institutions in the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

*D. Ch.*

Alfred M. Wierzbicki, *Osoba i moralność* [The Person and Morality], Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, forthcoming in 2020.

In the recommended volume, Alfred M. Wierzbicki presents the output of two 20th-century Polish philosophers: Karol Wojtyła, who held the Chair of Ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin from 1954 to 1978, when he was elected Pope John Paul II, and Tadeusz Styczeń, Wojtyła’s student and close collaborator, as well as his successor to the university chair. Wierzbicki describes the ethics developed by Wojtyła and Styczeń as part of what he calls “a personalistic awakening,” conceived as the birth of a philosophical and theological current aimed at the renewal of Catholic thought. While considering whether the discussed Lublin thinkers might be regarded as the founders of a distinct school within the personalistic movement, the author identifies the ideas they shared with other philosophers who opposed the reductionist, positivist approach to the human being characteristic of the period and, at the same time, underscores Wojtyła’s and Styczeń’s original contribution both to personalism and to the 20th-century philosophy as such.

Developed as a result of the existential and social experience of the totalitarian systems of nazism and communism, and in opposition to the philosophies adopted by their theoreticians, the thought of the Lublin personalists is not, in Wierzbicki’s view, simply a response to the historical situation. In fact, Wojtyła and Styczeń began a new philosophy, developed mainly in the field of ethics, combining the classical, Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy of being with the modern philosophy of the subject. Such a synthesis was made possible by virtue of an in-depth reflection on the historical experience of man, which

embraced, on the one hand, a negation and destruction of humanity and, on the other hand, the effort to safeguard—to use Wojtyła’s term—“the irreducible in man.”

The first part of Wierzbicki’s book shows the emergence of Wojtyła’s new model of ethics out of two intellectual endeavors: (1) reflection on the ideas proposed by prominent philosophers of the past (such as, e.g., Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Max Scheler) in order to extract their pre-personalistic intuitions, and (2) phenomenological analysis of the content of the direct experience in which the human being experiences himself as a moral agent. One of the paths along which Wojtyła’s philosophy developed to reach its maturity is illustrated by an analysis of what Wierzbicki calls “the personalistic corpus,” i.e., the future pope’s three works: *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (*Love and Responsibility*), *Osoba i czyn* (*The Acting Person*), and *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności* (*Man in the Field of Responsibility*). The first of these works comprises an ethical (philosophical, as opposed to theological) reflection on specific ethical problems, i.e., ones related to the Catholic teaching on human sexuality and marriage. The ethical analyses in question led Wojtyła to formulate the personalistic norm in the light of which the person is considered as a *bonum* towards which the only adequate attitude is love. In the second work of the *corpus*, Wojtyła temporarily abandoned ethical inquiry and turned to philosophical anthropology, striving for a better understanding of the structure and dynamics of the human being as a person: a conscious subject capable of self-determination and the efficient cause of his actions, existing and fulfilling himself in a community centered on the common good. Wojtyła’s return to ethics, based, as it were, on the results of his anthropological reflection, is expressed in the third volume of the series. The work, which remains unfinished, was initially designed as a textbook, its concluding part authored by Tadeusz Styczeń.

Although the project Wojtyła began with *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności* has never been completed, Styczeń—as Wierzbicki shows in the second part of the recommended volume—continues developing his teacher’s fundamental metaethical and ethical insights with his own original analyses, formulating a new variety of personalistic ethics. Inspired by existential Thomism, on the one hand, and focused on a precise analysis of the experience of morality, on the other, he revised the traditional deductive model of ethics (upheld in Thomistic textbooks), in which moral norms are derived from anthropological and metaphysical propositions. In his new model, ethics is an independent philosophical discipline: it is empirical in the sense of being grounded in the experience of the existence of the moral duty (opposed to the sensualistic concept of experience), and as such, culminates in the metaphysics of morality.

Wierzbicki describes numerous discussions in which Styczeń engaged both with the philosophical tradition, e.g., by proposing a solution to the problem of the transition from ‘is’ statements to ‘ought’ statements indicated by Hume, and with his contemporaries, e.g., with such thinkers as Tadeusz Kotarbiński or Tadeusz Czeżowski, who sought the concept of ethics based on experience and independent of especially religion and theology. These considerations are followed by a presentation of selected ongoing controversies provoked by Styczeń’s views and their interpretation. An example of such a controversy

may be the debate on his alleged ‘veritative’ personalism (which holds that the normative, or morally binding, power of truth is the fundamental principle of ethics, and which, as such, is opposed to the personalism focused on the dignity of the person) or on the role of truth in the moral life of a person.

Never disregarding the universal character of the ideas and controversies he presents, Wierzbicki helps the reader understand their significance by placing them against the background of the historical events and social issues of the time (such as Styczeń’s particular insistence on the significance of truthfulness in social life in the context of the Solidarity movement of 1980 and the martial law imposed in 1981 to crush it).

In *The Person and Morality*, not only does Wierzbicki explain the views of Karol Wojtyła and Tadeusz Styczeń, but he also provides the reader with an insight into their style of philosophizing and, perhaps, into their exceptional relationship of teacher and pupil, collaborators, and—last but not least—friends. Moreover, the book seems deeply informed by the personal experience of its author, himself a student of Styczeń’s, as well as a participant in the discussions and witness to the events he describes. We recommend Wierzbicki’s ‘double portrait’ of the two Lublin personalists to contemporary philosophers, theologians, and historians, as well as students of any of these disciplines. The volume may be of special interest to all those who wish to understand better the thought of John Paul II, but also to any reader willing to explore the impact of philosophical ideas on cultural, social and political life.

P. M.