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## Philosophical Personalism

The term "personalism" may denote either (a) a standpoint (theory, assumption, conviction, etc.) affirming and explaining the value (dignity) of persons, or (b) a specific scientific method, which consists in focusing investigations on persons more than on non-personal beings. Personalism can also be predicated (c) of actions, laws, institutions, attitudes, etc. that promote and defend the development, good and dignity of persons. Philosophical personalism is a standpoint (a) affirming the value (dignity) of persons. There are many kinds of philosophical personalism:

**Metaphysical personalism.** According to metaphysical personalism, persons are the most valuable beings in the universe, i.e. persons possess a dignity (value) which is not found in non-personal beings (cf. D. von Hildebrand, T. Styczen, J. Seifert, K. Wojtyła).

Metaphysical personalism may have manifold justifications. (a) It may attempt to justify the thesis of the dignity of persons by showing that persons possess valuable properties, such as freedom, reason, or that unique perfections can be achieved by them, etc. (b) The thesis of dignity of the person can also be justified by intellectual experience (insight), in which dignity is discovered. (c) Metaphysical personalism may also have a religious justification. For example, if one believes that God created the human being in his own likeness, this likeness can be considered to be the source of the dignity of men.

According to metaphysical personalism, human persons are social and historical beings but are not reducible to either society or history (cf. B. P. Bowne, R. Buttiglione, E. Mounier, J. Royce, E. Sprangler, M. Scheler).

**Ethical personalism** is based on metaphysical personalism. Ethical personalism attempts to show how the dignity of persons can and should be respected. It attempts to establish and to explain the content of duties and norms that arise on the basis of the dignity of persons. Usually, this explanation takes place in two steps.

First, ethical personalism elaborates the most general norm that arises on the basis of personal dignity. This is the norma nor-

mans (the norm of norms) of ethical personalism, for it is assumed by all moral norms. There are many formulations of this norm, but all of them refer somehow to the principle (norm) of love. As Tadeusz Styczen says, "Der Person gebührt Liebe". That is, the good of each person should be respected and promoted for the sake of that person. This norm can also be captured in the maxim "Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam." (The person should be affirmed / respected on account of himself.) Another formulation can be found in Immanuel Kant, who showed that the person should never be treated as if he were merely a means (for our action) but rather should always be considered first of all to be an end in himself.

The second step of the investigation begins when the norma normans is explained. In this stage, ethical personalism investigates more particular moral norms than follow from the norma normans.

Ethical personalism does not create a system or abstract rules "to be followed regardless of the concrete situation" but rather attempts to disclose universal structural elements of concrete moral calls. It takes into account that the uniqueness of situations and persons requires that general norms be specified by a concrete and unrepeatable content (the principle of prudence) (cf. Aristotle, E. Mounier, G. Marcel, R. Spaemann).

This step assumes a developed philosophical anthropology (first of all, an understanding of human nature). Only if one knows who persons are (what their nature consists in) can one elaborate universal norms that express how persons are to be loved. If ethical personalism does not have a sufficiently elaborated anthropology, it may turn into a relativistic personalism or a legalism.

**Relativistic Personalism** is a widespread form of personalism that differs in some fundamental ways from the ethical personalism outlined above. It attempts to ascribe certain capacities to the human person, and especially to the person under the aspect of his freedom, which do not really belong him. Protagoras expressed this standpoint well in his maxim "the person is the measure of all things". Today for example, proponents of situation ethics or of the conception of creative reason often call their

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theories "personalism." In fact, they propose relativistic personalism. Ultimately, their conceptions assume that the human person can freely constitute duties on the basis of the ethical principle of love, without reference to other values and ethically relevant factors.

**Theological Personalism** is a theory which shows that the Absolute Being is personal. The theory of a personal God usually is opposed to pantheism (F. E. D. Schleiermacher).

**Christian Personalism** is a stream of philosophy that is inspired by Christianity but justifies its conclusions through natural sources of knowledge. This standpoint assumes metaphysical, ethical, and theological personalism (cf. D. von Hildebrand, J. Maritain, É. Gilson).

**Polish School of Ethical Personalism.** The Polish school of Ethical Personalism is associated with the chair of ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin. This school of thought was started by Karol Wojtyła and is further developed today by Tadeusz Styczen and Andrzej Szostek.

The thought of this school has been inspired by classical philosophy (St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas) and by phenomenology (Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden). Of great importance have been the collaboration with Rocco Buttiglione, with realist phenomenology (John Crosby, Josef Seifert), the dialogue with existential Thomism (Etienne Gilson, Albert Krapiec), and contacts with theologians of the University of Lublin, such as Czesław S. Bartnik.

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The school develops the philosophical traditions of metaphysical and ethical personalism (explained above).<sup>1</sup> Some of the specific contributions of this school to ethical personalism are to be found in the areas of:

1. The philosophy of the human action<sup>2</sup>
  2. The theory of ethical experience and the development of a method for the philosophical interpretation of this experience<sup>3</sup>
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3. The theory of ethical justification<sup>4</sup>
  4. Critique and analyses of some contemporary streams of ethical relativism<sup>5</sup>
  5. Contributions to social philosophy and to philosophy of politics; ethical analysis of some current moral problems and dilemmas<sup>6</sup>
  6. Systematisation of problems of general ethics<sup>7</sup>
  7. Contributions to philosophical anthropology and the ethics of love<sup>8</sup>                   jj

## Endnotes:

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- 1 Cf. Karol Wojtyła, Tadeusz Styczen, Andrzej Szostek (1979) *Der Streit um den Menschen. Personaler Anspruch des Sittlichen*. Kevelaer.
- 2 See: K. Wojtyła (1981) *Person und Tat*. Freiburg; (1981) *Towards a Philosophy of Praxis: An Anthology*. New York.
- 3 Cf. T. Styczen (1972) *Problem możliwości etyki*. Lublin; (1980) *Autonome oder metaphysische Ethik?* In: S. Kaminski, M. Kurdziaek, Z. Zdybicka (1980) *Theory of Being to Understand Reality*, Lublin S. 193-239; K. Wojtyła (1962) *Problem doświadczenia w etyce: "Roczniki filozoficzne" 17*, S. 5-24.
- 4 See: T. Styczen (1972) *Ethik und Anthropologie in methodologischer Sicht: "Theologie und Glaube" 62*, S. 219-233; (1979) *Die Unterscheidung "das sittlich Gesollte" "das sittlich Richtige" und das Problem einer autonomen Ethik*, in: N. Huppertz, *Die Weltkrise des Menschen*, Meisenheim, S. 53-64; (1986) *Das Problem allgemeingültiger sittlicher operativer Normen*, in: *Universalité et permanence des lois morales*. S. Th. Pinckaers et C. -J. Pinto de Oliviera (ed.), Fribourg, S. 45-60; (1992) *Gewissensautonomie und Norm*, in: *Busse? Umkehr. Formen der Vergebung. Referate der "Internationalen Theologischen Sommerakademie 1991" des Linzer Priesterkreises in Aigen/IM, Steyr*, S. 191-218. Andrzej Szostek (1978) *Dwie uwagi o utylitarystyce*. Na marginesie współczesnej dyskusji w teologii: "Zeszyty Naukowe KUL" 21 (3-4), S. 46-54.
- 5 See: T. Styczen (1986) *Akzeptiert Gott "in blanco" eine autonome Moral des Menschen? Anonymer Anti-theismus in der theologischen Ethik?: "Theologisches" nr 194*, S. 7084-7096. A. Szostek (1992) *Natur-Vernunft-Freiheit. Philosophische Analyse der Konzeption "schöpferischer Vernunft" in der zeitgenössischen Moraltheologie*, Frankfurt am Main.

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- 6 See: T. Styczen (1993) *Solidarnosc wyzwala*. Lublin; (1993) *Europa vor dem Tribunal der Geschichte: "Offerten Zeitung"*, nr 9, S. 9-10.
  - 7 See: T. Styczen (1993) *Wprowadzenie do etyki*. Lublin; (1969) *Metaethik, ein neues Ding oder ein neues Wort?: "Internationale Dialog zeitschrift"* 2, S. 62-68; (1974) *Ist Ethik eine Wissenschaft?: "Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift"* 25, S. 317-335; (1976) *Autonome und christliche Ethik als methodologisches Problem: "Theologie und Glaube"* 66 (19), S. 211-219; (1988) *Anthropologische Grundlagen der Ethik oder ethische Grundlagen der Anthropologie?*, in: *Sein und Handeln in Christus, St. Ottilien*, S. 23-33.
  - 8 See: T. Styczen (1985) *Die Liebe als Erfüllung des Lebenssinns. Von "Redemptor hominis" zu "Dives in misericordia"*, in: *Veritati Catholicae. Festschrift für Leo Scheffczyk zum 65. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von A. Ziegenaus, F. Courth, Ph. Schäfer, Aschaffenburg, S. 379-403; (1986) *Der Mensch als Subjekt der Hingabe seines Selbst. Zur Anthropologie der Enzyklika "Familiaris consortio"*, in: *Die Würde des Menschen. Die theologisch-anthropologischen Grundlagen der Lehre Papst Johannes Paulus II.* hrsg. von G. Höver, R. Öhlschläger, H. T. Risse und H. Tiefenbacher, Mainz, S. 123-149; (1996) *The Origins of the Concept of the Person: Four Variations on the Suggested Theme: "Dolentium hominum"*. *Church and health in the World* 11nr 31, S. 150-154; K. Wojtyla (1979) *Liebe und Verantwortung: eine ethische Studie*. München; (1993) *Person and Community: Selected Essays; Übers. T. Sandok*. New York.