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THE HIERARCHY OF HUMAN VALUES

Independently of all the theories of values the historical man gave continuously evidence of living in the world of values and antivalues, and at the same time he left many testimonies of his enchantments with true values and disillusionments with antivalues or false values. Contemporary theories of values are aware of the importance of the problem, but in many of them there is no integral anthropology present and this made them incapable to cope with the confronting of their tasks. The source of such limitations of the theory of values can be psychologism, sociology or basic tenets of the theory of knowledge¹.

The first condition of a true theory of values must be the truth about man conceived integrally. Only in the light of such a truth about the man it is possible properly to understand totally conceived needs of man and integrally understood, responding to these needs, values.

An integral vision of man has always been the subject of the teaching of the Catholic Church, and it became the subject of special concern of John Paul II. Referring to the cognitive possibilities of man and to the data of Divine Revelation this teaching sees man in the world, but as a specific entity among other entities; as a being belonging to the world by nature, but transcending the world because of the personal character of his existence, and particularly because of capacity to exist in a personal communion with God and other personal beings. Man in a such a vision appears within the dimension of nature, the dimension of a personal subject on the level of personality which is the psychic structure of this character of the human mode of existence.

¹ A. J. Nowak, *Hierarchia wartości a sumienie w aspekcie psychologii głębi*, "Roczniki Filozoficzne", 30(1982), z. 4, pp. 105-124; A. L. Quintas, *Las experiencias de vertigo y la subversión de valores*, Madrid 1986; idem, *A Methodological Introduction to the Study of Values*, 1988, CUA (typescript).

The mentioned mode of human existing reveals itself as hierarchized: nature, personality, person-subject. It is in this hierarchization that one must seek for the basis of understanding the hierarchy of human values².

I. THE VALUES OF NATURE

Human nature – analogically to all other living natures – has its own needs, potentiality and values, through which it is being fulfilled and through which it reaches its development in harmony with its potentialities. The needs of human nature can be expressed by the tendency to self-preservation, the preservation of the species and the acquisition of material conditions necessary to realize those needs.

To the need of self-preservation corresponds the value of food and drink, and presently we are becoming aware of the value of the natural environment. This need is so unconditional that failure to satisfy it in a sufficient degree threatens the human individual with an inescapable ruin, and its insufficient satisfaction paralyzes his developmental potentialities and dooms it to shrinkage and slow agony. The satisfaction of this need can be accomplished in harmony with the human mode of existing of man or with an abandonment of the human character of the existence of man. Human nature belongs to person-subject existence of man. Human nature belongs to person-subject existence of man and only then does it remain within its human identity, when it does not violate its person subject nature. The moment when the satisfaction of those needs emancipates itself from the integrity of humanness, we face the replacement of food and drink with the antivalues of debauchery and drunkenness or drug addiction (drug habit). To the need for the preservation of the species corresponds to the value of sex, which in itself is not evil but good. It is a real value to which corresponds a real need in human nature. It should however be noted at this point that there is a difference between this need, and the former needs. The need for food, drink and the natural environment are unconditional needs for the human individual, but the need for sex is an unconditional need not for the human individual but for the species. Thus it is clear that the individual in order to live must satisfy the self preservation need, but it is not necessary for the human species that each individual satisfy his/her sexual need. This remark

² W. S ł o m k a, *Wolność i zniewolenie*, Wallington, N.J. 1988.

may be important for understanding of the value of living in virginity or celibacy.

In spite of this we must state that the need for preservation of the species is rooted in the concrete human individual and that those concrete human individuals are carriers of this need, and that this need is satisfied in them with the value of sex. Each normal individual of the human species is marked with the sexual need and the potentialities connected with it and has a natural right to satisfy this need with the sexual values. This right however can be realized only when respecting the right of the species to exist and respecting the person-subject character of the human being created in the image and after God's likeness and with the choice of virginity or celibacy the above right is fulfilled by resignation motivated by dedication to higher values.

The use of sexual values contrary to the good of the species or to the good of the human person, or against the chosen higher values creates disorder in that sphere of human life and independently of the amount of pleasure experienced by man, it will lead to behavior contrary to person-subject dignity of man, and his God – intended, vocation.

The need for possession of material goods and its fulfilment does not belong to human nature in the same sense as the former needs do. Nevertheless, the role of this value within the context of self-preservation and preservation of the species makes for counting it among the needs of human nature although in a derivative sense. To the value of possession of material goods one must ascribe primarily the possession of a dwelling place, clothing, and means for living without fear of tomorrow. Absence of those values undermines the potentiality of the man for self-preservation and the preservation of the species. A danger to the humanity of man may consist not only in the lack of those values, but also their imprisoning possession, or possession alienated one, which does violence to the hierarchical character of the human being and in effect with the hierarchy of human values. The Catholic Church expressed this point in the Vatican Council II in the *Constitution of the Church in the contemporary world*, "The worth of the human being is more in what he is than in what he has" (*Gaudium et spes*, 35).

II. THE VALUES OF PERSONHOOD

Although the notion of personhood is still a matter of debate, it is accepted that it consists in its holistic unity of psychic characteristics organized into a

dynamic structure acquired during a life-long experience and open to the world of values and meaning³. To modify somewhat the thought of A. H. Maslow⁴ we may say that the basic needs of human personhood can be reduced to these three: The need for existential security, the need for personal security and the need for development, to which correspond three basic values: the value of securing existence, the value of personal security and the value of dignity and respect.

The material security already mentioned in connection with the value of nature is reflected on the level of the person and pertains to the very existence of man. It is not only the mere fact of possession that counts here but the societal affirmation and societal security through belonging to a definite social group that would assure certainty in that domain.

Acceptance, love and friendship are values of personhood – security. Lack of those values produces pathological individuals. The neuralgic profile of this malady has been amply developed by Karen Horney. According to this author a human individual subject to this pathology is incapable of loving himself, but desires incessantly to be loved, reaching towards threats and blackmail and even towards the demand of justice⁵.

The developmental dynamism of the human person leads towards identification of the self, its own dignity and the value of respect for this dignity. It is here that we see a bridge between the needs and the values of personhood and the human person in which both, the dimension of nature and that of the person find their completion.

III. VALUES OF THE PERSON

The mystery of the person-subject character of the human being can be and *de facto* is felt in experimental psychology. This is confirmed by Maslow's statements about the so called peak experiences of human beings which bring them closer to the kingdom of "Being" through selfless experiences of Truth, Goodness and Beauty and thorough the experience of purpose and growth and

³ W. Prężyła, *Funkcja postawy religijnej w osobowości człowieka*, Lublin 1981, p. 32;
G. W. Allport, *Personality. A Psychological Interpretation*, New York 1937.

⁴ A. H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, New York 1968.

⁵ K. Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, 2nd ed., New York 1964.

happiness⁶. This however is explained by philosophy of being and ultimately by God, its Creator and Saviour. At this level of humanness, which designates its dignity and immortality, and which indicates the moral dimension of the human stance and activities and the ultimate beatifying fulfillment – we intend to formulate the problem of needs and values or rather the problem of potentialities and dynamisms and, corresponding to them, values. In the potentialities and dynamisms we include: the capacity for knowing proper to man as man, the capacity for love, the capacity for admiration, the capacity for conscience and goal directedness. To those capacities and dynamisms correspond the values of ultimate Truth, Good, and Beauty as well as moral values and the value of happiness.

1. THE VALUE OF TRUTH

Human history testifies to the fact that man carries within him the hunger for truth which does not let him rest until he reaches the ultimate Truth which is God. This hunger may express itself through the endeavour to know separate subjects and to know oneself, and it may lead to utilitarian knowledge but ultimately it leads man towards the ultimate Mystery of all Being and forces him to humbly give himself into the sphere of His activity towards meditation and contemplation, where the knower and the Known merge into oneness without losing their own identity⁷.

2. THE VALUE OF THE GOOD

To the capacity to love – the ability to "be for" – corresponds the Good, that is the possible good and the Existing Good. This capacity is rooted in the very structure of the personal existence of man who as a person defines himself through existing in relationship. Of course, existence in relationship may have cognitive and aesthetic aspects but existing in relationship through love means being a gift for actual Good, or possible good, which precisely because of love changes from possibilities into actuality. There exists also the beatifying communion in the cognitive and aesthetic dimension, but in the communion of love the lover and the beloved become gifts for each other and thorough this

⁶ Maslow, *op. cit.*, ch. I-II.

⁷ *Ibid.*

constitute an inseparable unity – the second half of the self, a communion of indivisible happiness.

Philosophy will talk at this point about the unity of Truth, the Good and the Beautiful but in Christianity it will specifically elevate the value of the Good and the Love. The whole originality and essence of the Christian religion is expressed in the thesis that God is Love, that God loves us to the point of giving the Son and the Holy Spirit and that He made us capable of loving as He Himself loves us. Within this context it can be said, that the realization of the capacity for loving through existing for God and for others reflects Divine love, as a Source, and in that sense makes the love present, that is, makes God present.

3. THE VALUE OF BEAUTY

Although theories of the beautiful and of aesthetic experiences are numberless and one may say that in this area it is impossible to find a common denominator nevertheless looking at the problem from the vantage point of philosophy of being and from within the context of the subjective potentialities of man we can expect some mutual understanding in that matter. Following this conviction we can say, that man is endowed with the capacity for admiration, fascination to which there corresponds the value of the beautiful all the way up to the Absolute Beauty, which is God. It is of significance, that the peak human experiences, described by Maslow, confirm the world of this capacity and corresponding to it values, as well as of the unity of Being, Truth, the Good and the Beautiful⁸. For Christians it is precisely God who is the Truth, the Good and the Beautiful; more than that, this Truth, Goodness and the Beautiful presences itself in a Personal God and the highest experience of Truth, Goodness and the Beautiful is ecstatic fulfilling and beatifying communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

4. MORAL VALUES

The capacity for conscience characterizing human beings as human had been questioned, but mankind, whenever it was faced with evil even legalized by human law, judges evil according to this human capacity. Conscience as an ability rooted in the human being by the Creator is a dynamism directed

⁸ Ibid., ch. II.

towards moral values that is a dynamism identifying moral good and evil and calling for the choice of the good as a moral duty. Conscience is the first judge of man if that man betrays the duty revealed to him.

As a special presence of God in man, conscience is an actual sanctuary of humanity, the basis of dignity and freedom against all pressures and attempts towards lack of freedom. Betrayal of conscience, the betrayal of the revealed by it duty is not only a betrayal of God, but also the betrayal of the mentioned dignity and freedom of man; it is deviation from one's own happiness, which ultimately consists in communion with God: the Father, the Son and the Spirit and the creatures participating in this communion.

5. THE VALUE OF HAPPINESS

The human being as such is characterized by the dynamism of purposefulness, the value of which is the union with personal God, the union producing ecstasy, joy and happiness. Man is really created for happiness but this happiness consists not only in self-fulfillment, but above all in a beatifying communion with the Divine Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and also with all persons and with everything that remains in communion with God, a communion of love, which is the final allembreacing fulfillment and the ultimate happiness not subjected any more to any danger, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth [...] This is the dwelling of God with men: and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and God himself will be with them. And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more" (Ap 21, 1-4).

IV. PRACTICAL DEMANDS OF THE HIERARCHY OF HUMAN VALUES

The whole misunderstanding in the accusation against Christianity concerning the demands of life and the violence to the needs of human nature have their source in the lack of the integral vision of man and of neglecting of the hierarchical character of the human being and of the value of that being.

The Christian vision of man does not question the reality of the human body and senses, their needs and values, it does not question the reality of the psychic, personal life of man and his needs neither does it question his values,

but it does not overlook the reality of the person-subject character of the human being, his dignity, his vocation towards selfawareness and selfdisposal, and his needs and values. It maintains simultaneously that the basis and dignity and freedom of the human being is located in the dimension of person-subject, and that in effect this dimension of human existence must be acknowledged as the foundation of hierarchization and composition of man, the foundation of the hierarchy of needs, and human values. The source of constraint in the realm of human values lies not in the acceptance of the reality of needs and the biological-sensory nature of man or in the reality of psycho-personal needs and values of human life, but in the rejection of the truth in the hierarchical composition of the human being, and as an effect of that, of a deviated acceptance of the value of that being. The lie may take place whenever the needs and values of human nature are seen and experienced without regard to the needs and values of human personhood and of the human person. It may also take place whenever the needs and values of personhood will be seen-treated and experienced without taking into account the needs and values of human nature and the human person. Finally, the mentioned lie is possible whenever the needs and values of the human person are experienced without taking into account the needs and values of the nature and human personhood in accordance with the hierarchic composition of the human being and as a consequence of this in harmony with the order of the hierarchic needs and values.

The needs of nature and the values of these needs will not become a threat to human dignity and freedom, if they will be conceived in connection with the needs of the personhood and the human person and their values. On the contrary, the satisfaction corresponding to the mentioned hierarchy and of the needs of nature proper to its values is the condition of a regular development of man at the level of personality and personal life. A similar satisfaction of personal needs with proper values conditions the possibilities of proper development of life at the personal level.

It has to be stressed however that this, which conditions finds its *quasi* fulfillment, its value, and the proper humanizing in that, which is conditioned, but which transcends the conditioning. In this sense, we may say that human nature finds itself in human personality and in the human person as human, and similarly the human personhood finds itself in the human person. Analogically, the world of needs and values of human nature finds itself as human within the world of the needs and values of human personhood and of the human person. The human person finds itself on its divine level of existing, in its similarity to God, and its existence in communion with God: The Father, the Son and the Spirit and also with the whole Divine world.

The violence done to this order of the hierarchized human being, of human needs and human values, may carry with it deceptions within the realm of the experiencing of human freedom, but ultimately, it constitutes always an attack on the orderliness of being human, and on reaching of the final fulfillment and final happiness.

Within this domain a very instructive testimony has been left by one of the American psychologists – H. C. Link – who at first shared some objections against the demands of religious life, in connection with humanism and with human freedom, but afterwards as a result of life experiences, arrived at the conclusion that it is psychology which proves that man cannot reach the fullness of human life, or of human happiness, without discipline and sacrifices, and he is incapable of those, without the values brought in by religion. This is why he entitled his book: *The Return to Religion*⁹.

HIERARCHIA LUDZKICH WARTOŚCI

Streszczenie

Autor osadza problematykę wartości i hierarchii wartości w chrześcijańskiej wizji antropologicznej. W związku z tym wyróżnia wartości właściwe naturze ludzkiej, ludzkiej osobowości i człowiekowi jako bytowi osobowo-podmiotowemu. W wyniku tak postawionego zagadnienia świata wartości zarysowuje też wpływające z tego konsekwencje praktyczne.

⁹ H. C. Link, *The Return to Religion*, New York 1936.