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From the Rule of Truth to Self-Governance. The Personalistic Foundations of Democracy according to Tadeusz Styczeń

Introductory remarks

To understand the rich and multi-faceted work of eminent thinkers, we attempt to grasp their key organizing motifs. Two central integrating ideas, developed over several decades, can be identified in Tadeusz Styczeń's thought. These are: the person and their dignity, and the experience of truth. Styczeń claimed that an ethicist's duty and public mission is, at all times, to point to the most effective ways of proclaiming the person's dignity¹ and to seek the truth. Referring to the figure of Socrates, the Lublin-based ethicist held him up as a model of an indefatigable seeker of truth, especially the truth of the human being, capable of remaining loyal to the truth, once discovered, even at the cost of freedom and life. Styczeń's reflections focused on the relations between and the interpenetration of ethics and anthropology.

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¹ See: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę* [To reveal a person], in: *Wprowadzenie do etyki* [Introduction to ethics], ed. M. Filipiak and A. Szostek (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993), 17.

Aware of the rank of personalistic issues, he also addressed the questions of social ethics and the ethical foundations of politics. A number of Styczeń's texts were inspired by contemporary historical developments, such as when Poland regained its sovereignty after the years of communist slavery and totalitarianism was replaced with democracy.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, dated 2 April 1997, determined the social and political order in Poland. Article 2 states: "The Republic of Poland is a democratic legal state that embodies the principles of social justice." In accordance with Article 15, its territorial structure provides for a decentralization of public power. This means all the inhabitants of the territory form a self-governing community by force of the prevailing law.² As a subject, that community can undertake to realize certain public actions autonomously and of its own responsibility. What is of primary importance here is that the notions of community and self-governance, as introduced to the constitution, have not only a legal but also an axiological meaning.

This is an attempt at identifying and analyzing the assumptions T. Styczeń believes should form the ethical foundation of that self-governing community and thereby of the state's democratic order. Self-governance, a pillar of democracy, is deeply personalistic, as it stems directly from a person's capacity for self-determination. Following the central ideas of Styczeń's personalism, the discussion will seek to answer the questions which are key to understanding democracy: What is the essence of being a self-governing human subject among other self-governing human subjects, how is it expressed, and how does it adopt a form of democracy?

² See: Paweł Śwital, *Gwarancje prawne udziału mieszkańców we współzarządzaniu gminą* [Legal guarantees of the participation of residents in the co-management of the commune] (Radom: Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy "Spatium," 2019), 139.

The dignity of a self-governing subject

The concept of the person and its dignity plays a crucial role in T. Styczeń's anthropology and ethics. The moral experience of a direct obligation to affirm the person for their own sake and the sake of their dignity is the foundation of his personalism. Styczeń formulated this norm as follows: "The human person must be affirmed for its own sake" (*Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*).³ The human being's existing differently from and above all other beings—what can be cognitively grasped in the experience of the world—is the

condition, both necessary and sufficient, for expressing this overarching ethical principle. Styczeń is led to discover the special rank of the person and its dignity by analyzing the moral duty as the normative interpersonal relationship. "An object-person," he wrote, "simply faces a subject-person as someone who, by the very fact of being a person, demands recognition from any persons, without regard to any other purposes."⁴

The perception and appreciation of each separate man is the condition of noting the value of any human communities. That value reveals the deepest roots of the human individual's personal dignity, which Styczeń calls man's

³ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Prawda o człowieku miarą jego afirmacji* [The truth about man as a measure of his affirmation], in: *Dzieła zebrane 3* [Collected Works 3], ed. A. M. Wierzbicki (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Instytut Jana Pawła II KUL, 2013), 252.

⁴ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Uwagi o istocie moralności* [Comments on the essence of morality], in: *Wprowadzenie do etyki* [Introduction to ethics], 34.

“identification card.” Discovering the other as worthy of affirmation in and of themselves is a pre-requisite to man’s personal awakening, his/her self-discovery and self-understanding.⁵

Several definitions of the person have evolved in the philosophical tradition. Boethius’ definition, *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia*,⁶ is the best known. Thomas Aquinas harks back to that, stating *persona est individuum subsistens in rationali natura*.⁷ Styczeń believes, however, Thomas’s *ineffabilis* (ineffable) says more of the person than any definition. Therefore, silence is what remains when facing the person’s ineffability and inaccessibility. “*Ineffabilis!*” he writes, “A call for silence about the person, towards its mystery. How revelatory... this call is, though.”⁸ A proper and complete discovery is still beyond the reach of what is accessible to thought and expressible with language; therefore silence is the sole appropriate response to a meeting with the mystery of the person. It is not an expression of resignation, however, but of surprise at and fascination with the person and his dignity.

Man seems to emerge as a being in a dramatic excess of the entire material order of the natural world. By virtue of his “interior,” he is an “alien,” “alienated,” a “different” creature.⁹ Styczeń says:

⁵ See: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości* [Human problem, love problem], in: *Dzieła zebrane 3* [Collected Works 3], 139.

⁶ Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *Realistyczna interpretacja rzeczywistości* [A realistic interpretation of reality]. *Zeszyty z metafizyki* nr 3 [Metaphysics notebooks vol. 3]. (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2005), 84.

⁷ Vittorio Possenti, *Osoba nową zasadą* [The person as the new rule], trans. J. Merecki (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2017), 29.

⁸ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę* [To reveal a person], 18.

⁹ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], in: *Dzieła zebrane 3* [Collected Works 3], 89.

We discover a person not only when we note that the person is not to be compared to anything else in this world, but also when we note that each of the persons is in their own way incomparable to any other reality in a unique way, that they are otherwise,... separately.¹⁰

This “personal dimension of man’s existence in the world is suggested by the semantic core of the word “person.”¹¹ It expresses the specific character of a human individual and points out man is more than only a creation of nature.¹² The discovery of the person as a *sui iuris* being in the world is also a co-discovery of their status, incomparable to anything in the world and in the universe, which is expressed with the word “dignity.” In the framework of classic philosophy, an important background to personalism, dignity, together with subjectivity before the law and completeness, expresses man’s transcendence in relation to the community. It manifests itself in the fact that the human being, the goal of all proceedings, is not ultimately explained with a set of material relations or with nature, but with reference to another personal “you” and, finally, with reference to God’s transcendent “Thou.”¹³ It is disclosed by the properties of personal being, such as the power of self-determination,¹⁴ incommunicability, uniqueness, and unrepeatability.

Proclaiming the personal dignity of the human being is the particular duty of an ethicist at any time. An ethicist worthy of this name

¹⁰ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę* [To reveal a person], 18.

¹¹ See: *ibid.*, 17.

¹² See: *ibid.*

¹³ See: Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne* [Man and natural law] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1986), 153.

¹⁴ See: Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 88.

should speak for and defend the dignity of every human being without exception. This is especially true of the most defenseless, above all, those already alive though not yet born. Therefore, care for such a person is inextricably linked with the care for a genuine democracy. In Styczeń's view, the attitude toward the unborn is a measure and test of authentic democracy.¹⁵ A lack of respect for that being and for its dignity undermines the most profound foundations of democracy. "To rule the state is to serve, by means of law, each separate man and everybody, without exception, within its jurisdiction."¹⁶ A democracy incapable of securing that most fundamental right of citizens, the right to live from conception to natural death, becomes a nightmare. All other rights, including that to freedom, so valued in democracy, preserve their proper sense and value insofar as they assume absolute respect for human life in its every phase as an unshakeable foundation.¹⁷ A verbally stated respect for human dignity that would not include man's life would be a fiction. The voice of a majority is not in itself a reliable criterion of truth. Was not Socrates sentenced to death and Adolf Hitler democratically mandated to speak for an entire nation? That's why Styczeń does not hesitate to call abortion "manslaughter and a suicide of democracy."¹⁸

Democracy runs the risk of becoming a fetish, an objective in itself. It may become a tool in the diktat of a majority ready to go as far as to exterminate millions deemed to be obstacles to the construction of their own *Lebensraum*.¹⁹ The human drama manifests itself in the option of using freedom for the purpose of self-enslavement. However,

¹⁵ See: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Nienarodzony miarą demokracji* [The unborn as a measure of democracy], in: *Wprowadzenie do etyki* [Introduction to ethics], 181.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁷ See: *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the way freedom is exercised depends on man himself. Therefore, the Lublin-based ethicist believes that the relationship of freedom to truth is the sign of self-governance. He writes:

[Those] who are ruled by truth govern themselves, guide themselves, and determine themselves: self-governance is the rule of truth.²⁰

Examples from general history demonstrate it is occasionally easier to gain power over others than over oneself. Marek Rembierz is correct to point out:

An appropriate will and convenient circumstances (even given relatively modest means) will often provide a broad extent of rule over others. But while holding power over somebody, even lawful and fair, it is difficult to maintain an adequate degree of self-control, since it is hard to resist the temptation to yield to the siren call of the element of rule over others.²¹

It seems maintaining self-control is the key moral challenge to anyone holding power or eager to hold power over others.

The deeper the rule is to reach the human soul and mind while extending to large human crowds, the stronger, ethically motivated restraint it needs, as it is quick to lead to a loss of that self-control.²²

²⁰ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 87.

²¹ Marek Rembierz, *Gra władzy i wolności. O ludzkich dążeniach do samostanowienia i podmiotowości w epoce ideologii konkurujących o zawłaszczenie człowieka* [A game of power and freedom. About human aspirations for self-determination and subjectivity in the age of ideologies competing for human appropriation], in: *Wolność i władza w życiu publicznym* [Freedom and power in public life], ed. J. Mysona Byrska and W. Zuziak (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT, 2008), 118.

²² *Ibid.*

The loss of self-control is the basic risk associated with any kind of power. Instead of developing moral strengths, a holder of power over others can become brutal, actuating anti-human characteristics within. This is best illustrated by historical figures like Julius Caesar, Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin.²³ Styczeń claims, therefore, that a ruler rules, instead of dictating or directing, when ruled by truth—above all by the truth about “the ruled.” Nothing is more aversive and alien to self-governance and the rule of law than lying and violence based on deception. “The rule of truth,” Styczeń says, ‘is... the natural place for meeting and agreement between the rulers and the ruled.’²⁴ It combines self-governance (the individual order) and the rule of law (the public order).²⁵

Freedom in truth as a measure of authentic self-governance

The title of this section refers to Karol Wojtyła’s idea of the normative power of truth, which Styczeń would expand on. In *Person and Act*, Wojtyła wrote:

It is in conscience that the special coupling of truth and obligation takes place, manifested as the normative power of truth,²⁶

²³ See: *ibid.*, 119.

²⁴ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 88.

²⁵ Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności* [A man in the field of responsibility], 88.

²⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [The Acting Person] in: „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne [“The Acting Person” and other anthropological studies], ed. T. Styczeń and al. (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1994), 205. The monograph was first published in Krakow in 1969. The 1994 edition is used by the author here.

adding,

The duty is the experiential form of the dependence on truth the person's freedom is subject to.²⁷

Man's acts of will are constituted by their assignment to truth. "Person's transcendence in the act," Wojtyła said, "is not only a self-dependence, a dependence on my own 'I'. It also involves a moment of dependence on truth, which ultimately shapes freedom, since the latter is realized not by subordinating truth, but by becoming subordinated to truth."²⁸ Wojtyła stressed the difference between man's transcendence, effected "by becoming subordinated to truth," and the concept of freedom, in the name of which a subject will subordinate the truth to himself. The boundaries of human autonomy specific to the person are outlined by the dependence on truth. It constitutes a person in its transcendence.²⁹ Styczeń expresses it this way:

Man is thus a self-dependence in becoming dependent on truth.³⁰

It is only this self-dependence that defines the autonomy specific to a human subject, or to self-governance. The person "manifests itself" above all as an autonomous being that tends towards truth. This is the nature and the expression of their being a self-governing subject.³¹

In looking for a proper understanding of the relationship between freedom and truth, Styczeń is helped by Socrates's drama and his deci-

²⁷ Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [The Acting Person], 199.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁹ See: *ibid.*, 199.

³⁰ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 78.

³¹ See: *ibid.*, 88.

sion. For the wise man of Athens, imprisoned by force of an unjust sentence, the threshold of his cell proved morally impassable. To leave the prison with the help of some influential friends meant denying what he'd acknowledged as truth himself. "Socrates failed to choose the freedom offered to him," Styczeń writes, "because he'd chosen freedom.... It goes without saying this is the freedom in truth, since any other freedom is not, to Socrates, worthy of man."³² To flee from prison would be to betray himself and the truth he knows.

Addressing the case of "the prisoner of conscience," Styczeń shows the connection between faith to a truth and faith to oneself which cannot be known or justified other than by means of one's inner experience.³³ These thoughts were inspired in particular by the drama of Kowalski (the Polish equivalent of Smith), who faces an offer made by a representative of the totalitarian authorities in Poland during the martial law: "Sign your name and you shall be free." That Kowalski is anonymous, but represents everyone faced with a very difficult situation and discovering himself. "Kowalski sees, in an illuminating instant," Styczeń says, "[that] he can't ignore the truth he once discovered and acknowledged as such without ignoring, even more, without compromising himself. To save oneself is to save a freedom that is incomparably deeper and more important than the freedom offered by the prison supervisors in return for Kowalski's signature, which would be tantamount to a betrayal of truth. To save one's freedom, to save the loyalty to a known truth, and to save oneself are one and the same thing!"³⁴

³² Tadeusz Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie* [Freedom in truth] in: *Wprowadzenie do etyki* [Introduction to ethics], 84.

³³ See: Andrzej Szostek, *Natura, rozum, wolność. Filozoficzna analiza koncepcji twórczego rozumu we współczesnej teologii moralnej* [Nature, mind, freedom. Philosophical analysis of the concept of creative reason in contemporary moral theology] (Rzym: Fundacja Jana Pawła II, 1990), 282–283.

³⁴ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie* [Freedom in truth], 87.

Actions guided by truth and a subordination of freedom to truth are the conditions of preserving man's identity as a self-determining subject. Betraying a known truth, on the other hand, is a moral suicide. History records many prisoners of conscience. For example, in the cases of Thomas More, Stefan Wyszyński or Jerzy Popiełuszko, by choosing the freedom of truth, each became a hero of humankind who rescued not only his humanity but also the humanity of his violators. Their only weapon was the power of their testimony, occasionally made at the cost of a martyrdom.³⁵ Regardless of who the Socrates of today is, each of their dramas demonstrates the essence and status of the conscience as an act specific to man, a reasonable and free being in search of truth, and free by the freedom of his choice. Truth cannot be in any way imposed by force; it can solely be discovered.³⁶ The only thing man needs to be afraid of is the lie. Since self-governance is the rule of truth, any falsity, anarchy, or the will to discard truth are alien to self-governance.

Nothing is closer to self-governance, therefore, than an intent listening to the voice of truth.³⁷

In the light of Styczeń's analysis, the rulers of others are subject to a special moral test. Their public service is primarily a space for affirming truth and thus the subjectivity and dignity of the human person, since a multidimensional assistance with man's self-fulfillment through truth is supreme goal.

³⁵ Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie* [Freedom in truth], 93.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁷ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 87.

Participation and solidarity

This final part will address T. Styczeń's view that "to be yourself... is to choose solidarity with every other [person], to step beyond yourself towards every other [person]."³⁸ The two preceding sections conclude that an adequate discovery of a person involves the discovery of the truth about their dignity. In parallel, a complete knowledge of yourself—of your own "I" as capable of self-transcendence in the truth of a self-governing subject, as such due respect from yourself and others—is conditioned by the discovery in yourself of every other person as deserving affirmation in and of themselves. Styczeń says:

‘I am an ‘I’ among other ‘I’s’, I’m a self-governing subject among other self-governing subjects, a person among persons... a person in the world of persons.³⁹

Therefore, in the name of the truth about oneself, about one's personal ‘I’, one needs “to step beyond oneself towards every other [person].”⁴⁰ At the same time, an ‘I’ in the act of self-cognition—by virtue of self-transcendence in truth—is trapped in the truth about every other ‘I.’ Everyone else also falls into the same trap of the truth about every other, “self” once they perform an act of self-discovery. He also, having learned the truth, binds himself to its recognition. What is

³⁸ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Być sobą to przekraczać siebie – O antropologii Karola Wojtyły* [To be yourself is to exceed yourself – On Karol Wojtyła's anthropology], in: „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz inne studia antropologiczne [“The Acting Person” and other anthropological studies], 509.

³⁹ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 91.

⁴⁰ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Być sobą to przekraczać siebie* [To be yourself is to exceed yourself], 509.

especially important, the other [person] can only fulfill themselves in full by affirming every other person, including myself. That's why T. Styczeń will say that

we are together and each individually doomed to radical solidarity.⁴¹

In T. Styczeń's personalistic theory, everyone's fate is bound with an active attitude to others. The ethicist of Lublin believes the development of a community-oriented attitude by an active participation for the sake of 'other I's' self-fulfillment is the only way a self-governing 'I' can become fully self-fulfilled.⁴² "Only one who offers an opportunity for self-fulfillment to others gives such an opportunity to himself,"⁴³ he wrote. This postulate goes against both collectivism and individualism. The analyses of the *Person and Act* author concerning the interpretation of the ontological foundations of community and public life are clearly echoed here.

The notion of participation is central to Karol Wojtyła's personalistic social thought. It is close to the concept that classical metaphysics used to explain the being's unity in plurality. Wojtyła saw the base of the unity of any human community in the structure of a personal being itself—in the person's capacity for a subjective presence in a community. He wrote:

The participation means... a property of the person itself, an inner and homogeneous property which decides that, by being and acting with others, a person is and acts as a person.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Styczeń, *Być sobą to przekraczać siebie* [To be yourself is to exceed yourself], 509.

⁴² See: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i innych* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁴ Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [The Acting Person], 310.

He also understands participation as “what corresponds to the transcendence of an acting person, where the act is performed together with others in a variety of social or interpersonal relations.”⁴⁵ Such a participation has a deeply personalistic sense. Being and acting together with others, humans confirm and realize themselves not only as persons, but also as beings who can’t find themselves in full other than by means of a disinterested gift of themselves.”⁴⁶ Participation is not limited to the person’s capacity for a subjective presence in diverse dimensions of a community alone, and reaches far deeper. In Wojtyła’s opinion, a person is also capable of participation in another’s humanity itself. “All participation in the community is based on this,” he writes, “and at the same time also finds its personal meaning through the ability to participate in the humanity of each person.”⁴⁷ The notion of “neighbor” points to this capacity in a person. The neighbor’s frame of reference, adopted for the purpose of building a community, helps to note and appreciate in the other person that which is independent of their membership in any group or political party. Thus, it provides the broadest platform for building the community, “extending further than any otherness.”⁴⁸

Such an understanding of participation presumes an anthropology according to which humans fulfil themselves not by cutting themselves off from each other, but by connecting with each other. In this anthropology, a community is the constitutive dimension of a person’s self-realization.⁴⁹ It provides for a synthesis of two planes, personal (sub-

⁴⁵ Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [The Acting Person], 309.

⁴⁶ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, *Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis Gaudium et spes* (7.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), no 24.

⁴⁷ Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [The Acting Person], 331.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See: Rocco Buttiglione, *Mysł Karola Wojtyły* [The thought of Karol Wojtyła], trans. J. Merecki (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1996), 244.

jective) and community-wide. It results in the discovery that it is only owing to an affirmation of and by ‘the other’ [person] that humans become aware of their real value. They also realize that “the other” [person] is not an enemy, a rival or competitor, but a neighbor.

This means, in other words,—Styczeń says—an ‘I’ reaches its full identity in acts that effectively express an attitude of solidarity with every separate other [person] and all of them jointly, founded on their personal dignity. This attitude can also be described as participation in others’ humanity, solidarity or simply charity.⁵⁰

This is where we reach the core of T. Styczeń’s conception of man, according to which the problem of man is the problem of love. The person’s status is so weighty that it requires affirmation for itself. It is such a good that “only love is an adequately valuable reference to the person,”⁵¹ K. Wojtyła’s personalistic norm states. The act of affirming a person for himself is the sole adequate response to the good that a person is. Styczeń claims that whoever fails to perceive the duty of affirming the other for themselves has failed to see “the different” and “the higher” not only of the other [person] but also of themselves amidst the world. They fail to discover themselves in their own selves.⁵² The act of love is man’s final step on the path of self-identification and self-fulfillment, to a “definitive definition of oneself.”⁵³ Styczeń writes:

⁵⁰ Tadeusz Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 95.

⁵¹ Karol Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* [Love and responsibility] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2001), 42. K. Wojtyła’s monograph, *Love and responsibility*, was first published in 1960. The 2001 edition is used here by the author.

⁵² See: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości* [Human problem, love problem], in: *Dziela zebrane 3* [Collected Works 3], 133.

⁵³ See: *ibid.*, 139.

The acts of love can exclusively be the acts of self-fulfillment. Love only is the path to self-identification.⁵⁴

This arises from the very essence of a personal subject, by force of their nature called to a personal bond with the other [person]. K. Wojtyła claims humans fulfill themselves “to the end” in acting only when the act is realized together with others. T. Styczeń would add that ‘I’ fulfills itself “to the end” as an ‘I’ only when ‘I’ do the truth in love.”⁵⁵

Love, as an attitude and an act arising from that attitude, is a unique agent binding all people into a single great community, the human family. This happens by each and every person participating in the same personal dignity, a result of humanity itself. Styczeń refers to that personal bond as “solidarity with the other in their humanity.”⁵⁶ It is both the only effective path to a personalization of all social bonds and to a realization of the common good, whose constitutive part is the joint participation in truth of all reasonable human persons.

Conclusion

An apology for personal dignity is a crucial characteristic of Tadeusz Styczeń’s ideas. The texts he left behind are a testament to combining his passion for exploring human beings with his concern for them. The Lublin-based thinker believed the supreme objective of ethics is the affirmation of man, which can solely be measured with truth. In ethical terms, the truth about humans and their good is also a foundation

⁵⁴ See: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Osoba – podmiot we wspólnocie* [Person – subject in the community], in: *Dziela zebrane 3* [Collected Works 3], 60.

⁵⁵ See: *ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

of the values on which the public life is built and without which a genuine democracy cannot be constructed. Philosophy, traditionally seen as the love of truth, is first of all expected to seek the truth about man, becoming a servant to human dignity, to man's self-governing subjectivity. The attitude to this matter becomes 'the test of truth' that helps to distinguish a philosopher from an ideologue or a dictator.⁵⁷ It becomes a criterion for the evaluation of political, economic, and cultural systems as well. A denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person, by its very nature a subject of rights that cannot be violated by anyone, invariably gives rise to totalitarianism.

Like Wojtyła, Styczeń was convinced that the dimension of a double transcendence, proper only to man as a person, is the reason for the exceptional status (dignity) of the human subject. A person, by virtue of his very nature, is capable of both transcending the world and himself both toward the truth he knows, and in relation to other persons. Both thinkers emphasize the human person's transcendence "by a subordination to truth," which Styczeń terms the rule of truth, as well as the fact that humans see themselves only when, discovering every other [person] as worthy of affirmation for their own sake, they make a disinterested gift of themselves to others. That is why he states that man is "an autonomy called to a communion, a self-dependence called to solidarity, a solitude called to love."⁵⁸ This may be an ideal, too rashly dismissed as naive and impracticable. It would not be a good idea to abandon ideals, however. Therefore, one must always follow the ideal when shaping contemporary democracy. Styczeń argues that the concept of a self-governing subject, whose status and value are expressed with words like "person" and "dignity," is key to understanding the meaning of democracy, which otherwise would not reveal its real value in full.

⁵⁷ Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich* [A man in the field of responsibility for himself and others], 97.

⁵⁸ Styczeń, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości* [Human problem, love problem], 140.



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according to Tadeusz Styczeń

SUMMARY

The central ideas that organize the thought of Tadeusz Styczeń are the person and its dignity, as well as the experience of truth. The guiding principle of ethical personalism that he formulates, “The person of others should be affirmed as one’s own, that is, for their own sake.” does not stop at the level of individualistic ethics, but is translated into some further issues of social ethics. The author of the article attempts to present and analyze the assumptions which, according to Tadeusz Styczeń, constitute the anthropological and ethical basis of the order of a democratic state. If democracy is not just a myth and an empty slogan on the lips of politicians, it must become a tool for the affirmation of a person for societies following its paths—a self-governing human subject who is open both to knowing the truth and to others. Following Styczeń’s central ideas of personalism, the author’s deliberations aim at answering the key question of democracy: What is the essence and expression of being of this self-governing human subject among other self-governing human subjects, and how does it then take the shape of democracy?

Keywords: person, dignity, truth, community

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