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THOMISTIC INSPIRATIONS OF GABRIEL MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

If we assume that philosophical anthropology concentrates around historic existence of the human being, then the problem of its historicity comes down to an analysis of passing as an objective process. However, in case when a man is placed in the centre of reflections, comprehended not so much as a specimen of a biological species, but as a creator of values, the history problem gains new meaning. It is exactly then when one must look at it as passing endowed with sense. Its metaphysical virtue makes it impossible to define by itself what creates its sense, since its internal goal is aimed at passing alone. Only activity explaining it forms out of history a “thing” possible to comprehend. It manifests itself also in a way of defining a criterion classifying it into individual time units. The thing is not only about whether it exists at all, but how to apply it. In other words, solely it is not only about its description of history, but exposing axiological value brightening it so as, while noticing facts, not to avoid their cultural assessment. Only this gives history cohesion which generates the need of ethical look at past. It also generates the necessity to find historical attitudes of man who, by his activity, creates values discovered at every stage of his evolution. In this sense given cultural occurrences, not losing value of historical occurrences, become anthropological occurrences. This is why avoiding system order, we have to accept an attitude of systematic facts at the most. To tell the truth, we concentrate on finding an internal connection between them, but we move from explaining them logically. *Ipsa facto* we resign from constructing them logically for the benefit of their historical ordering. Moreover, we indicate what a relation of a specific subject to a historical process is. Determining such a relation

gives a picture how unsupported hopes of followers of a philosophical system to build dogmatic (*a priori*) anthropology are. It also indicates with great force, *notabene* against Hegel and later also Rickert, that history does not have to be endowed with rational element of thinking. Being impersonal passing¹ deprived of inner axiology, it can be given sense only by man. Since it is him who, existing in history, thanks to his metaphysical inclinations mentioned among others by Kant², exceeds it considerably. This suggests that philosophical anthropology holds promise to overcome naturalistic comprehension of man.

Nevertheless, one may encounter certain terminological difficulties here. Application of categories appropriate for intellectual formation to philosophical anthropology appears problematic. Such difficulty results from at least two reasons. Firstly, an object of anthropology cannot be formulated in intellectual categories. Philosophical anthropology analyzing man in a context of his socio-ethical conditioning, defines him socio-physically. That means the aim and sense of his life do not take forms of logical commands. Secondly, contents essential for philosophical anthropology cannot constitute transhistorical contents. At the most, one may feel tempted to present their philosophy of life thus providing evidence of thinking characteristic of the humanities. *Ipsa facto*, the concept of intellectual formation seems vague. With regard to similar, though in terms of range different, reasons also the notion of paradigm does not apply without reservation to philosophical anthropology, because it is not possible to grasp man's metaphysical inclinations in one coherent system of thinking determining complete knowledge about him.

Looking then at the position of philosophical anthropology in entirety of philosophical problems a question, which in a sense determines its essence, has to be asked. The thing is whether placing itself within the range of broadly perceived culture it belongs to scientific creativity or rather to a realm of wisdom in ancient Greek meaning. This question engenders another – is it possible to hope that it will definitely characterize man? Both questions being a modification of Kant's ones, found their solution in XX century philosophy. It was then that Max Scheler's thought included in the text *Stanowisko człowieka w kosmosie*³ patterned after palaeontology and Darwin's theory of evolution, referring to

¹ See L. Kołakowski, *Kultura i fetysze*, Warszawa 1967, s. 236.

² See I. Kant, *Prolegomena do wszelkiej przyszłej metafizyki, która będzie mogła wystąpić jako nauka*, tłum. B. Borstein, Warszawa 1993, s. 176.

³ See M. Scheler, *Stanowisko człowieka w kosmosie*. W: *Pisma z antropologii filozoficznej i teorii wiedzy*, tłum. S. Czerniak, A. Węgrzecki, Warszawa 1987.

Dilthey's *historical mind*, created hermeneutical way of comprehending man. In subsequent years it was to be based not on specific science, but on Kierkegaard's *quasi*-theology, which was a specific interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy⁴. Being developed in that direction, anthropology created its own point of view, which not always coincided with expectations of natural science. Therefore, if we assume that a pattern of philosophical deliberations it worked out did not meet the standards of scientific thinking, it is a contemporary version of wisdom. *Ipsa facto*, it realizes itself where science proves hopeless. This is also where metaphysical wisdom emerges, the order of which is totally different than science order.

So it is difficult to talk about unification of philosophical anthropology in the spirit of a philosophical system. It does not form it since it is impossible for it to be determined within framework of universal theory. Similarly, it does not propagate unquestionable truth, which it simply does not accept. And even if it does present man in a theistic perspective, this is not to talk about him and God through prism of scientific evidence.

This is not yet evidence that man in his metaphysical pursuance is not conditioned rationally. Even though a religious element is strongly present in him, still it does not lead to ethics. The situation, as proved by Kant, is quite the opposite. That means a problem of metaphysics is not totally devoid of reason. At least since Socrates time it has been a bow of philosophy towards wisdom, in which good, truth and beauty were to become share of every man if only he was capable of rational effort to seek them. In this sense, it is a matter of philosophical anthropology to ask about its own essence. Neither resembling intellectual formation, nor paradigmatically a version of philosophical deliberations, I am willing to formulate it historically. One can therefore assume that it is marked by a tradition of great authorities with Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, existentialists or personalists of contemporary times at the top of a list. Historical character of this standpoint postulates continuity of philosophical heritage based on dissimilarity of solutions put forward by both rationalism and existentialism. Not indicating members of each of them, we will concentrate only on a general theoretical situation presenting a specified type of anthropological awareness since we understand that many of its forms are no longer up-to-date, but in a genetic not

⁴ I wrote about it more broadly in my work *Kierkegaard, Kant a antropologia filozoficzna*, Słupsk 1990.

theoretical sense. This allows to trace common inspirations of so various trends like Hegelianism and existentialism. Both of them, though historically distant, complement each other. Knowing that Hegel's rationalization of religion and ethics gave only partial results, one has to go back to anthropological questions rooted in life. Only this makes one realize that thinking based on intellectual philosophical expressions is disappearing. It also shows that what for a rationalist seems decided, for an existentialist means the beginning of a problem. This too proves that the right sense of anthropology does not lie in combination, but in seeking dialectical thread of rationalism and existentialism. Therefore, looking at Hegel's philosophy only through a historical aspect does not lead to understanding of this philosophy. Its actual sense is enclosed in what has been added in its context. Only then grasping its true meaning will be possible.

Such perception of philosophical anthropology results from certain determinism. Suggested by Étienne Gilson⁵ it shows inner connection of some ideas. While this one, according to Adolf Dempf, leading from ontologically first philosophical attempts through its epistemological-methodological attitude to modern times, lead to anthropological-hermeneutic crowning of contemporary philosophy⁶. Thus we deal with a periodical conception of idea development as the first project of a philosophical thought. This kind of a suggestion, having to do in fact with perpetually recurring problems, constitutes a methodological pattern of a philosophical issue. Relating it to dialectics of rationalism and existentialism we make sure that on the ground of philosophical anthropology metaphysical strivings of a human are its inseparable element. *Ipsa facto*, the vision of a pure mind with its aspirations to achieve absolute aim proved insufficient. That is why it has to be related to historical awareness of a definite man. In other words, the third stage of Dempf's scheme, confirmed by E. Tugendhat's⁷ systematics, puts an end to aspirations of rationalistic philosophy. Its assumptions, surpassing psychological cognition of man limit a dogmatic mind so that losing its dominant function it will not be negated. *Ipsa facto*, *structural mind* transforms into *historical mind* adopting post-modernistic features of *post-rational mind*⁸.

⁵ See É. Gilson, *Jedność doświadczenia filozoficznego*, tłum. Z. Wrzeszcz, Warszawa 2001.

⁶ See A. Dempf, *Selbstkritik der Philosophie*, Berlin 1947.

⁷ See E. Tugendhat, U. Wolf, *Logisch-semantische Propädeutik*, Stuttgart 1983.

⁸ See W. Welsch, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna*, tłum. R. Kubicki, A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Warszawa 1998.

The result of this are new metaphysical questions, which are becoming the basis of new philosophizing. This is why the tradition of rationalistic philosophy becomes with time thinking according to historical values. In this regard philosophical anthropology, quitting Platonic understanding of existence, refers to realistic-empirical philosophical point of view. Created in the spirit of Aristotle's philosophy it shows (contrary to Plato) physical-spiritual side of a human being. Realism established by Aristotle, constituting later manifesto of empiricism, was accordingly a response to idealistic projects of the Eleatics, Pythagoras and Plato. Formulating substance as a real element of being, protected it on the one hand from Parmenides' logical positivism, on the other from Democritus' atomization. *Ipsa facto*, Aristotle suggested a new kind of ontology, which influenced existential understanding of philosophical anthropology. If every change of ontology changes also understanding of anthropology, then return to Aristotle and later to Thomas Aquinas is not uncritical return to the past, but the return to existential metaphysics after domination of idealism.

Thomism is this very trend which É. Gilson defines as "existential philosophy"⁹. In its realism many contemporary philosophers have found anthropological inspirations. This creates a situation in which provenance of current varieties of human philosophy should be searched for in the Middle Ages. Its starting point marks an activity which has become a central motif of further philosophical contemplations. Which is why if we consider the fact that thomistic reflection with its realism fulfills expectations of existential philosophy, then G. Marcel's standpoint seems to be its contemporary continuation. His main thought comes down to a thesis that since one cannot deduce existence, it is only a basic value both in ontic and ontological order. Naturally, existence not being a logical category, is beyond reach of rational justifications. So it can neither be assumed nor excluded. It is a real element of being, negation of which is impossible. Impossible is also for existence to function depending on a thought. In other words, it cannot be deduced out of it. Existing on its own it is the basis of every existence. Man, not constructing his own existence, is totally dependent on it¹⁰. Endowed with corporeality, empirically defines the moment of his existence. Only such a definition of man expresses him existentially.

⁹ See É. Gilson, *Tomizm: wprowadzenie do filozofii św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, tłum. J. Rybałt, Warszawa 1960, s. 504.

¹⁰ See M. Terlecki, *Egzystencjalizm chrześcijański*, Londyn 1958, s.18.

Dependency between a human and experience of his corporeality is expressed by relations between a subject and remaining elements of being. The world according to Marcel is a continuation of individual subject's corporeality. Thanks to it a human is a continuator of being. Man possessing a body affirms being which is displayed in him. In his *Dziennik metafizyczny* he wrote that to define something means to except that a given thing is of the same nature as the object. Thus he emphasized primacy of existence in relation to thought. Existence is being incarnated, whereas thought is a condition of freedom. Therefore, a problem of freedom moves from a rational to emotional sphere. Bounding it with a problem of mystery it resigns from a problem description of man. Intellectual tasks of *cogito* are brought down to an issue of emotional experiencing of being. At the same time, existence does not exhaust all of being. It is only the first element of internal experience. It is just in it that existence opens up to the so called all-embracing wholeness, in which we gain feeling of being. Its understanding is conditioned by moving towards of what is unclear, what only in mystery can be tangible. Hence Marcel's language is metaphorical.

He believes that origin of philosophical thought should derive from a description of inner experience, which is ingrained deep in being. This is why it cannot be amounted to a category of curiosity, which is a problem category. While philosophy is to be placed on the mystery side, sense of metaphysical quest comes down to entering a sphere of existence. Then every understanding of being has to be preceded by understanding of man. Philosophy is valuable, says Marcel, as long as it serves discovering sense of individual existence. Its discovery is a matter not so much of knowledge as of wisdom¹¹. *Ipsa facto*, a philosopher is not a passive observer of the world, but its active participant. That is why he directs a sting of criticism against attempts of a systematic grasp of the world. It denies all value, because the task of metaphysical philosophy is to experience reality and not its scientific description¹². Such philosophy cannot exceed the sphere of human experiences. A philosopher must explore himself. However, exploring a mystery is not entirely possible. So it is difficult to find definite justifications acknowledging the sense of existence. This kind of metaphysics bears characteristics of existential philosophy.

Such an attitude reminds Socrates' philosophy continued in the Middle Ages by St. Augustine. It was born out of scepticism and disappointed

¹¹ See H. Milbrand, *Filozofia egzystencjalna G. Marcela*, „Przegląd Filozoficzny” 2002, z. 1-4, s. 137-147.

¹² See M. Terlecki, *Egzystencjalizm chrześcijański...*, s. 17.

idealistic philosophy. No science gives the truth about man, so it must be forsaken. In connection with this he rejected rational cognition in favour of intuition and experience. An integrating point of analyses of a human turned out to be an empirical method. It is to render depth of experiencing and to secure it from scientific objectivization. Experience is accomplished by a direct participation in being. This state reflects the so-called secondary experience. Of course, Marcel even in this case does not define its meaning. It is known that it is opposed to scientific analysis of a human. Not defining this experience he claimed that one's own experience springs from it. This is why philosophy should analyze inner experiences. The experience itself he suggests should be named 'personal experience'. In *Homo viator* he mentions about preparing man to take part in being. It may happen on different levels, referring man to abilities of genuineness of one's own existence. This experience becomes complete the moment immanent richness of man's inner personality is revealed. It begins from a basic level which is human existence.

This in turn, connected with corporeality, is a guarantee of human being as existential being. Corporeality is what on the one hand man possesses, and on the other what shapes him. So man exists in his body and simultaneously possesses it. Without doubt it is a kind of paradox, for possessing does not belong to order of a mystery, but a problem. However, pointing out towards artificiality of body and existence separation, the paradox does not find a broader justification.

Corporeality makes us connected to other beings. Pluralism of being causes Marcel to extend his conception of freedom onto a problem of communication between persons. Feeling other beings creates another, after corporeality, dimension of human *I*. This is a phenomenon of being integration necessary to move towards such values as love, hope, faith. They are the ones to define participation of a human in the world met. A man living his own life at the same time lives in entirety surrounding him. In connection with this, if he experiences another man, he experiences the world. This is why communication with *Another One* takes place not only on the level of real existence. If it is to be the truth of being, it has to fulfill anthropological imperative marked by an act of love. It is just of out it that Marcel makes the main form of coexistence of individuals. People's opening to existential engagement results from it, too. Involvement of one man in another means giving some credit¹³, that means moving towards his direction. Moreover, it means not so much the

¹³ See G. Marcel, *Dziennik metafizyczny*, tłum. E. Wende, Warszawa 1987.

wish to get to know him as ethical feeling. While locating its sense in hope, it crosses boundaries of actual being. In God then Marcel sees love absolute protecting a human from realization of relative goals. In him a horizon of full being opens. Also in him we experience authentic being, giving us hope for life in truth and faith. This one must realize itself in God. However, for this to take place one has to reject the fact of objective cognition substituting it with hope.

Hope is the opposite of fear and resignation. It is something difficult to determine and define since it fits limits of mystery. While it is no way of cognition of being, it is metaphysical awareness of truth. Marcel contrasts it, referring to terminology of existential philosophy, with despair and hopelessness. Only in God does man realize himself completely. If we believe in God, then this faith is at the same time faith in man. Faith absolute, that is faith in God, through its reference to man creates a communion of people united by love¹⁴. This is how Marcel from talking about man, passes to talking about God. Who is he then?

Marcel did not solve that problem in a clear way. He only said that God is not an empirical category for he cannot be experienced by senses. He is not defined by **intellectual** categories either, because he would be recognized in some ways then. Lack of his positive definitions of him places him within a sphere of mystery. This is why the only way of his existence turns out to be ethical existence. It constitutes a basis of human existence being at the same time the source of its authenticity. *Ipsa facto*, God is available exclusively in the sphere of faith, love and hope. In connection with this he wrote that existence of absolute is not a hypothesis, but a matter of ethical views of man¹⁵. Hence he critically approached classic theistic reasoning. He claimed it was internally contradictory, because contradiction is in nature of an object being proved. Consequently, it is difficult to talk about it in problem categories. The only evidence for God's existence must be an anthropological one, justifying value of human existence. With this Marcel indicates a contradiction of scientific argumentation of something belonging to a mystery sphere. True he does not deny St. Thomas' arguments their philosophical value, but claims that they should gain anthropological sense. That does not change the fact that Marcel allowed scientific speaking about God. Although theistic system – he used to say – did not exist, yet he perceived the necessity of faith rationalization. In this sense, in spite of considerable dissimilarity of both

¹⁴ See tenże, *Homo viator*, tłum. P. Lubisz, Warszawa 1984, s. 81.

¹⁵ See tenże, *Dziennik metafizyczny...*, s. 216-220.

those suggestions, there exist certain similarities. Their basis is realism. Thomas Aquinas accepts existence of being without any theoretical justifications. Naturally, he does not question existence of the world and man. Without a doubt, this is a view corresponding to Marcel's philosophy. Only that in his philosophy existence is deprived of thomistic objectivity. While in Thomas' deliberations philosophy of man is integrated with general theory of reality, in Marcel's this philosophy is reduced to philosophy of a human subject. Similarly when it comes to issues of cognitive experience. Thomas understands them through ontological status of being within internal experience. Marcel through external experience. Nevertheless, in both conceptions one can see elements of converged understanding of man. It should be taken as a thesis about thomistic provenance of philosophical anthropology.

Tomistyczne inspiracje antropologii filozoficznej Gabriela Marcela

Prezentowany tekst dotyczy zagadnień z zakresu antropologii filozoficznej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem propozycji egzystencjalnej Gabriela Marcela. Konfrontując sformułowaną przez niego filozofię człowieka z metafizyką Tomasza z Akwinu, sugeruję, iż rozumienie podmiotu ludzkiego obecne w myśli Marcela nie tyle z litery, ile ducha właśnie, nawiązuje do realistycznej ontologii wieków średnich. Dotyczy to przede wszystkim koncepcji istnienia, które *via* tradycja perypatetycka, *notabene* wbrew idealizmowi Platońskiemu, utrzymała taki model współczesnego filozofowania, w którym kwestia Marcelowej argumentacji teistycznej, w swej istocie odmiennej od argumentacji Tomaszowej, oraz problem cielesności, wiary i absolutu zdają się wyznaczać sens egzystencji ludzkiej.

