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## **Stefan Wyszyński's Personalistic Vision of Upbringing**

### **Abstract**

The personalistic concept of man, especially the one based on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, underscores the full autonomy of the human person, his freedom, the gradual discovery of the truth and good, and choices in accord with this cognition. The key issue in Stefan Wyszyński's personalism is the integral vision of the human person. This personalism is a system of upbringing that respects the nature and value of man who 'humanizes' the world and expresses himself while constantly evolving. He gives a personal, social and dynamic character to the community in which he functions. He has a right to be brought up in keeping with his nature and ultimate destiny.

### **Keywords**

Personalism, Christian personalism, upbringing.

## 1. Introduction

Questions regarding man, his identity, life and its transcendence are the subject of reflection within many academic disciplines. Anthropologists, philosophers, theologians, psychologists and specialists in pedagogy search for the answers while new social currents that emerge claim to be of personalistic character.

Contemporary personalism includes a variety of currents: Thomistic, axiological, existential and socio-economic. The analysis of personalism reveals its various dimensions: metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and theological.<sup>1</sup> A personalistic concept of man, especially the one based on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, underscores the full autonomy of the human person, his freedom, gradual discovery of truth and good, and choices in accord with this cognition.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Who is a human being?

According to new concepts and trends man himself is a god. It is as if he had only rights 'at the expense' of God, neighbours, the society and the state. Everything is subjected to man's judgement who is morally free, moreover, free from social obligations. Only private morality is acknowledged while religion is perceived as a private matter. Man's objective in life is his worldly happiness which he may try to achieve by all possible means. The highest economic law is the freedom to grow rich.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, in communism an individual ceases to have any meaning, any personal value. His only value is, as though, bestowed by the state and realized through life within society. As such he is denied the rights correlated with the person: freedom, thinking and agency. He must obey supreme authority above all. 'A person is a subject of total contempt, inexorable hardness of the political system, the inhumanity of bureaucratic lawlessness, despotism

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek w myśli współczesnej. Filozofia współczesna o człowieku*, Michalineum, Warszawa 1990, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. U. Gruca-Miąsik, *Rozumowanie moralne – osoba, rozwój, wychowanie*, UR, Rzeszów 2018, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, Pallottinum, Poznań 1993, p. 46.

and terror. In practice we deal with citizens turned into slaves for the benefit of collectivity.<sup>4</sup>

In this worldview man is also denied the freedom to believe in God and worship Him. His spiritual dimension is not recognized. Moreover, a world devoid of God and religious morality is the aim to be achieved. Technology becomes a new god, while proletarian equality is perceived as the greatest happiness.

Man's destiny and objectives in life are also negated. If God is to be 'expelled' from the world, then man should not seek happiness in communion with Him. The only legitimate aims in life are those approved by the state. Since spiritual values are of no importance, the goal of man's life is the good of the state, society, temporal happiness and one's own benefits. What follows is the deification of matter.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Stefan Wyszyński's Personalism

The key issue in Stefan Wyszyński's personalism is the integral vision of the human person. The person is of the greatest value (after God).<sup>6</sup> He is perceived as rational, self-aware, spiritual values-oriented, and free in his actions. As such, he should be considered on many different levels (e.g. metaphysical, moral, social and religious).

On the metaphysical level, the person is a unique being that is alive, rational, independent, self-aware and responsible for oneself. He is the subject of creative and free action. Endowed with reason and will which are of spiritual character,<sup>7</sup> man is directed towards the highest manifestations of being: truth, what is good, beauty and God as the source of being and values. Supernatural elements in the

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<sup>4</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, Pallottinum, Poznań 1993, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, Pallottinum, Poznań 1993, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa 1990, p. 681.

<sup>7</sup> 'Man is a person, a rational and free being, a master of creation. (...) There is no personality, rationality, freedom but in man.' S. Wyszyński, *Społeczność przyrodzona i nadprzyrodzona*, Warszawa 18.02.1957, vol. 2, p. 61. One can notice a reference to Jacques Maritain who claimed that a person is a universe of a spiritual nature, endowed with freedom of choice and thus constituting a completeness independent of the world. J. Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, Fernand Aubier, Paris 1947, p. 16.

form of grace,<sup>8</sup> faith, hope and love elevate man to a higher level of spiritual existence, thus making him a participant in God's life, opening him to the world of the mysteries of faith. On this plane, the human person attains the highest dignity transcending the order of the natural world.

Another level that must be underlined is the moral one. Here, the person appears as the subject of rights and obligations; he 'enacts' values that he discovers as well as creates. Endowed with conscience,<sup>9</sup> he is responsible for his actions. His free will, together with conscience, is what enables growth, seeing one's fault, creating moral, legal and social order based on objective norms that are voluntarily recognized and accepted. As such man regulates his own fate.<sup>10</sup>

On the social plane the person is open to the world of others. 'He may live and develop his properties only thanks to his bonds with other people.'<sup>11</sup> He lives in dialogue with others thus creating the space of free and rational beings of whom each is a subject and object of law. Moreover, each person has intrinsic worth, and yet he needs other persons if he is to evolve and find happiness. The person exists for himself and for others. One may, therefore, claim that husband and wife, parents and children complement each other, whereas social cooperation is made possible.

The spiritual sphere with a clearly defined goal is extremely important for the development of the human person. In the case of religious upbringing it implies following Christ, imitating Him, uniting with Him. It also entails implementing prayer, liturgy, sacraments into one's life, as well as forming moral integrity and harmonizing one's spiritual and physical life.

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<sup>8</sup> God 'desired men to become His children. Not only in the order of nature (He endowed everyone with a body and soul) but also in a more profound way – in the order of grace'. S. Wyszyński, *W obronie praw osoby ludzkiej i kultury humanistycznej*, 9.04.1964, vol. 16, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> M. Parzyszek, *Prawo wpisane w serce w nauczaniu kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Być człowiekiem sumienia. Interdyscyplinarny namysł nad fenomenem sumienia*, eds. R. Ceglarek, M. Sztaba, Regina Poloniae, Częstochowa 2015.

<sup>10</sup> 'There are values in man that he received from God (it is impossible to understand them otherwise) which constantly prompt his reason towards the truth. They do it permanently, so that even a man who seems to have grasped the truth, still asks questions, still checks all levels of his reasoning (...). Even the most diligent and precise of men never stops searching for the truth. He has some extraordinary right to the truth, he wants to know it completely, to see himself truly as well'. S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa 1990, p. 987.

<sup>11</sup> S. Wyszyński, *U podstaw soborowej nauki o człowieku*, in: *W nurcie zagadnień posoborowych*, ed. B. Bejze, vol. 2, Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, Warszawa 1968, p. 135.

The development of a mature religious life is possible through accepting the gift of faith, caring for sacramental life, prayer, practicing the commandment of love and the apostolate.<sup>12</sup>

All persons are bound by belonging to a community, having the same biological origin, rational nature, psyche, ability to love and seek the truth. Since constant transcending one's self is a specific quality of the person, then the whole process of development is meaningful when it entails serving transcendent values that rest in God. The human person who enters into an internal dialogue with God achieves his highest fulfillment, his meaning, value and purpose. He is at the same time the subject and object of love; he is for himself and for the other who loves him and who is loved by him. Then the world of the person achieves even greater unicity, simplicity and harmony. The love of persons on a spiritual plane means that this personalistic vision of man is exceptionally pro-social.

Stefan Wyszyński's Christian personalism goes beyond the psychological features of man – it emphasizes his deeper levels of personality (especially moral, religious and metaphysical); it acknowledges his supernatural capabilities. Thus this personalism draws attention to spiritual correlations which bind man with the world of other persons and the divine reality as well.

From the metaphysical perspective, the person is a being of a unique, rational and independent nature; from the moral one, he is value-oriented; from the religious one, he is in relationship with God. On the psychological plane, man expresses himself through his intelligence, character and temperament.

The person is a being composed of a body and soul. It is in the person that the power of body and soul, the psychical and spiritual energy, the power of brain, will and heart, as well as individual and social pursuits intertwine. The spirit may 'rebel' against the body, whereas the body 'knows' that without the spirit it is a handful of dust.<sup>13</sup> The person, a physical being, is incessantly on the way to achieve a higher internal, spiritual unicity: harmony of conscience and pursuits, convictions, love, cooperation with others.

A person's unicity is only one of his qualities. To understand who the person is we must consider his rationality, freedom, reflective consciousness, independence, creativity, ability to act purposefully, responsibility, authenticity, commitment, orientation on values and others.

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<sup>12</sup> M. Parzyszek, *Rodzina w nauczaniu kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego. Aspekt pedagogiczny*, Episteme, Lublin 2012.

<sup>13</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Bochen chleba*, Marianum, Poznań-Warszawa 1997, p. 139.

The person, the highest form of substantial being, is endowed with a unique value – dignity. As such, it is worthy of respect and a certain kind of honor. Its dignity encompasses: ontological (transcendental) goodness; physical goodness depending on the integrity of the body; functional value based on intellectual abilities, creativity, ability to work; moral value in the natural order based on integrity, rationality, good will and expressing itself in right deeds; supernatural value in the order of grace as the actual or potential child of God. As Czesław Bartnik notices, ‘The Primate based his personalistic thinking on the infinite dignity of the human person, as he himself often put it “the dignity of a child of God”<sup>14</sup>’.

#### **4. Stefan Wyszyński’s Personalism: Pedagogical Implications**

Pedagogical personalism by Stefan Wyszyński is not solely based on a theoretical doctrine. It is closely related to the socio-political situation in Poland (then the People’s Republic of Poland). The Primate of the Millennium supported Poles’ aspirations to freedom during this period and had no doubts that upbringing is the central point of the struggle for the survival of the Polish nation and its Catholic ethos. In the eyes of the communist authorities, the ideologized school was to be a place where a new, socialist man that respects internationalist values may be created. As part of this view grounded in a totalitarian system, the value of the individual and society understood as a community of people was deliberately degraded. It is in personalism that the Primate saw a chance to oppose the destruction of the person, both in the individual and social dimension. He was well aware that only man understood as the person could contribute to the work of building a nation that is capable of persevering and evolving (always with respect towards the good of an individual and the common good of the entire community).

Stefan Wyszyński’s personalistic vision of man entails a dual pedagogical role: diagnostic and apologetic. The first one consists in detecting influences of the communist ideology that pervaded society. Communism, based on the assumptions of dialectic materialism, proclaimed false liberation. Man was perceived through the prism of his productive utility, religion was thought to be ‘necessary evil,’ whereas religiosity was to be eradicated from the public

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<sup>14</sup> Cz. Bartnik, *Personalistyczny wymiar duchowości według Prymasa Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Gorycz prorocstwa*, Cz. Bartnik, STANDRUK, Lublin 2003, p. 117.

life.<sup>15</sup> Political, social, economic and cultural changes negatively impacted man as an individual and member of a society. Values cherished for years were being removed while propagated views and ideas threatened marriage and the family. Stefan Wyszyński had to face the challenges of atheism, secularization, alcoholism, divorce, selfishness, the 'contraceptive mentality', lack of the spirit of self-sacrifice, individualism, laziness, negligence, search for exaggerated comfort, extravagance or superficiality. It is these and probably many more phenomena that gave rise to his radical defense of man.

Stefan Wyszyński brought to light the evil arising from the premises of this system. He did not criticize it directly, but implicitly made people aware of moral, intellectual and material poverty of the system which inevitably leads to decline. The Primate argued that Marxist materialistic ideology was a source of evil and negatively impacted our personhood in its individual and social context. Last but not least, it hindered the reconstruction of society and the realization of true prosperity.<sup>16</sup> The Primate saw the solution to this crisis in following Catholic Social Teaching.

Stefan Wyszyński considered man's social nature on four levels: the level of the family, nation, international community and work.

The family is the primary community in which man lives. It is the most durable social unit and its power is not only of a biological character but also of a moral, educational, social and civic character.<sup>17</sup> It is meant to be a place where the highest values are recognized and realized not only on the level of the body<sup>18</sup> but of the spirit too.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński. Prymas i mąż stanu*, Éditions du Dialogue, Paris 1982, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński. Prymas i mąż stanu*, Éditions du Dialogue, Paris 1982, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa 1990, p. 687.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2221. 'The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation. The *role of parents in education* is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable.' Por. Jan Paweł II, *FC*, 36

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 52. 'Children should be so educated that as adults they can follow their vocation, including a religious one, with a mature sense of responsibility and can choose their state of life; if they marry, they can thereby establish their family in favorable moral, social and economic

And yet it is not only the family that contributes to the social development of the person, but the nation as well – it shapes our identity and develops our personhood. For Stefan Wyszyński the nation is an accidental, relational entity which exists not by itself but thanks to individuals i.e. the proper substantial beings.<sup>20</sup>

The analysis of Stefan Wyszyński statements on nation is multifaceted and concerns two essential elements. The first one involves one's background, tradition, history, economic situation, material and technical reality. The other element concerns the self-awareness of a community, language, spiritual culture and religion in particular.<sup>21</sup> Man develops his social nature also on the level of the international community which the Primate called 'familiahumana' – it serves nations, nations serve families and families serve the offspring. Thus 'familiahumana' is the subject of the Church understood historically, geographically and developmentally.<sup>22</sup>

According to Stefan Wyszyński's personalism man is the subject of his work, its originator and goal. Work destroys his physical strength but, at the same time, it releases spirit from matter. Work contributes to man's temporal but also eternal good, it develops spiritual talents, virtues and values.<sup>23</sup> Last but not least, work shapes Christian values called 'work's virtues': patience, forward-thinking, perseverance, meekness and diligence.<sup>24</sup>

The apologetic function of Stefan Wyszyński's pedagogical personalism implies the emphasis on the necessity of upbringing that encompasses man's reason, will, heart and his personal value. Bringing man up means to help him direct his natural abilities toward God, finding the values that God himself bestowed in his soul. Moreover, it means helping him love others and the world, binding his soul with supernatural grace, developing the gifts of the spirit.<sup>25</sup>

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conditions.' Cf. D. Opozda, *Rodzina najcenniejszym dobrem ludzkości – aspekt psychopedagogiczny*, in: *W służbie rodziny*, ed. R. Bieliń, Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, Warszawa 2000, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> J. Lewandowski, *Naród w nauczaniu kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, ODISS, Warszawa 1989, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Cz. Bartnik, *Chrześcijańska nauka o narodzie według Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, RW KUL, Lublin 1982, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Ojciec nasz*, PAX, Poznań 1977, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Duch pracy ludzkiej*, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1991, p. 111.

<sup>24</sup> M. Parzyszek, *Personalistyczny wymiar duchowości chrześcijańskiej w nauczaniu Stefana kardynała Wyszyńskiego*, Lublin 2003, p. 229 (maszynopis pracy doktorskiej M. Parzyszek).

<sup>25</sup> S. Wyszyński, *W światłach Tysiąclecia*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1961, pp. 124–125.

This personalism is a form of upbringing that is comprehensive and profound as it encompasses all qualities and pursuits of man. In the process of being brought up man broadens his worldview which now reaches the things of the world and those of heaven, temporality and eternity. Such a worldview prompts man to transcend one's self and seek the origin of his existence, the meaning of life and its purpose not only in himself but beyond. It helps him to think 'broadly' and protects him from sectarian narrowness.<sup>26</sup>

As a result, Christian upbringing appears to be the best one – the most social, as it brings the person up to live in a family which is an irreplaceable community<sup>27</sup> and in a society as well. It teaches how to respect man, his rights and dignity. It is also the most progressive – it requires constant effort and spiritual struggle.<sup>28</sup> It avoids the risk of one-sided upbringing: naturalism, intellectualism, chauvinism, misunderstood patriotism, materialism, body deification, cosmopolitanism or religious sentimentality. This kind of upbringing entails drawing conclusions, harmonizing obligations, ordering goals. It does not underestimate or diminish anything, and does not overestimate either.<sup>29</sup>

According to the Primate, Christian upbringing requires that we put out 'into the deep'<sup>30</sup>, so as to improve our personality. What shapes man most is his spiritual effort based on the abilities of human spirit and religious ideas.<sup>31</sup>

Christian upbringing, therefore, 'yields' decent people, just citizens and good Christians who are aware of their gift of faith and shape their lives following Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup> Personalistic pedagogy emphasizes the need for upbringing as it perceives man as something more than a blend of a body, emotions and subjective convictions – each of us is a unicity of body and soul, a being which thinks, loves and works both for others and for itself.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. II, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1995, p. 74.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Z Królewskiego Krakowa*, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1992, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa 1990, p. 73–75. Also S. Wyszyński, *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. II, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1995, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. M. Romaniuk, *Życie, twórczość i posługa Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 2001, p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lk 5:4.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. S. Wyszyński, *W światłach Tysiąclecia*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1961, p. 124.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. A. Rynio, *Wychowanie młodzieży w nauczaniu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Redakcja Wydawnictw katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2001, p. 157.

Thus, the fruit of personalistic upbringing is a 'mighty' man who, having reached one goal, pursues another, and yet the most essential experience for him is the encounter with other persons.

## 5. Conclusion

According to personalism, man's value and dignity are in himself. Moreover, he has values of both an essential and an autotelic character. As such, he cannot be treated instrumentally or as a means to an end. Thus, we need programs that will support human development while being in accord with personal and spiritual values, and not subordinated to economic or technical values. Only then can we speak about the best conditions for the development of the person (understood as a being endowed with freedom, capability of self-determination, and the opportunity to express himself through appropriate deeds and works). All other values must be subject to the development of the person.<sup>33</sup>

Characteristic of personalism is perceiving man as the person i.e. an integral being that is of bodily-spiritual, rational-volitional nature. The person conveys a certain potentiality, he realizes himself at the intersection of upbringing and self-education. It is personalism that broadens the horizon for his growth towards moral perfection.<sup>34</sup>

Stefan Wyszyński's personalism (together with personalistic pedagogy outlined above) is a system of upbringing that respects the nature and value of man who 'humanizes' the world and expresses himself while constantly evolving. He gives a personal, social and dynamic character to the community in which he functions. As such, he has a right to be brought up in keeping with his nature and ultimate destiny.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. U. Gruca-Miąsik, *The Person and Upbringing Within the Context of Anti-pedagogy and the Catholic Personalism Discourse*, "The Person and the Challenges" 9 (2019) no.1, pp. 99–110, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/pch.3364>.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. U. Gruca-Miąsik, *Rozumowanie moralne – osoba, rozwój, wychowanie*, UR, Rzeszów 2018, p. 88.

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