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Structure of man in the biblical act of Creation

The question about man, his origin, structure, place, and role in the world, relation to others and his ultimate goal, belongs to fundamental categories. In his pursuits, man constantly tries to find the right answer to this important question. These attempts can be noticed in every area of human life, both in commonly shared human experience and in academic and scientific research in the fields of philosophy, science, history, archeology, paleontology, religiology or ethnology of religion. Theological research, referring to natural as well as supernatural revelation, has its proper place and meaning. The basis of this analysis forms the structure of man resulting from the act of creation as described in the Bible.

Biblical texts about creatio

The analysis of the text on supernatural Revelation identifies the call of man into being as a special moment, crowning the whole work of God's creation. In the Old Testament we have two texts about the proctology of man: Yahwistic (Gen 2, 4b–24) and Elohist (Gen 1, 26–28). While reading these fragments one can notice that they are rather primitive, though also complementary descriptions. In the Elohist text the call of man into being is explicitly presented as the crowning work of God's creation which takes form of hexaemeron. The Yahwist text as a narrative is much more detailed and presents man within the environment which constitutes his milieu. It also tells the truth about the **line of** descent between a man and a woman (cf. Gen 2, 18–25).¹ The fragment from Genesis 1, 26; 5, 1, referring to the creation of a human by God “in our image, and our likeness”, is pertinent to the undertaken subject, as it discloses God's intention. Next, we deal with an account of the accomplished act of the call of humankind “in his [own] image” and as “male

¹ Cf. A. Läpple, *Od Egzegezy do katechezy*, vol. 1, trans. B. Bielecki, Warszawa 1986, p. 50–52; also, *Od Księgi Rodzaju do Ewangelii*, trans. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 1983, p. 56–73.

and female” (Gen 1, 27). This short statement from the Elohist text refers to the forerunner of the genealogy of a humanity that exists in God. As the biblical text implies, the whole man has been called into being, endowed with authority over the created world, and called into unity with God (cf. Sir 17, 3–12).² There is one more text of great value and importance to the issue. The text reads as follows: “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and named «Man», when they were created” (Gen 5, 1–2).³

Both Angelo Scola and Luis F. Ladaria see the ultimate structural view of humankind in the person of Jesus Christ. That is why the Old Testament texts concerning creation are fully implemented in the mystery of Incarnation and Redemption. The source of this statement can be found both in the words of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 14, 9) and in the texts of St. Paul (cf. 2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15–20).

Man in God’s plan – theo-logika

On the one hand, biblical texts clearly express a certain identity of man which can be termed by the contemporary notion of *integrity*, however, simultaneously, we can observe polarity between the material and the spiritual. Moreover, the nature itself contains differentiations regarding the construction of a body, temperaments and personalities. The problem of integrity of a human being was noticed by Aristotle who dealt with the issue of the relationship between intelligence and senses.⁴ This issue was addressed by St. Thomas Aquinas who analyzed the close relationship between the body and soul.⁵ It should be stressed that behind the name “a human” itself there is a claim about the greatness of his nature (cataphasis). Observation and experience indicate also his limitations (apophasis). Therefore, it can be stated that in the human nature there must be integrity (henosis) in this respect constituting the basis of his whole humanity. Externally, we notice materiality (*soma*), which causes limitations, and spirituality (*psyche*), which is completely different, immaterial, non-carnal.⁶ The body (Hbr. *basar*, Gr. *soma*) is a term used in the Bible to describe materiality as well as weakness, passing, imperfection (cf. Gen 6, 3.12). A soul or life are the notions expressed by use of a Hebrew word *nefes*, Greek *psyche*, Latin *anima*.

² Cf. W. Granat, *Fenomen człowieka. U podstaw humanizmu chrześcijańskiego*, Lublin 2007, p. 114.

³ In the paper I use biblical quotations from the Revised Standard Version, 1971, Swindon.

⁴ Cf. W. Granat, *Ku syntezie w definicji osoby*, „Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 3, 4 : 1960, p. 22.

⁵ Cf. idem, *Personalizm chrześcijański. Teologia osoby ludzkiej*, Poznań 1982, p. 576.

⁶ Cf. C. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, Lublin 2000, p. 362; cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, [in:] „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, eds. T. Styczeń, W. Hudy, J. Gałkowski, A. Rodziński, A. Szostek, Lublin 1994, p. 227–228. The author discusses human integrity in the context of actions and indicates the manifestation of the personal qualities of man. He states that phenomenological experience cannot show this unity. However, it can be clearly noticed on the basis of actions which reveal the transcendence of a person which, in turn, reveals the excellence of complexity of human nature. Ibid.

They emphasize vitality in human life and consequently characterize subjectivity of the one who is the bedrock of vital processes. According to A. Scola, this duality, which can be described as an experience of double unity, is very important both for the external experience of man and for his internal dimension – a spiritual life.⁷

As can be concluded from the biblical narration, man's materiality strongly ties him to the surrounding universe. Thus, we can describe a human as a relational being. This fact allows us to claim that man participates in the laws of nature and is coherent with it. However, he cannot be restricted to carnality or materiality alone. Accepting this concept unavoidably would lead to a conclusion that man is not different from the material – physical world and undergoes total materialistic determinism. Admittedly, we deal with strong reductionism in this point of view.⁸

It can be observed that man is able to surpass himself, in other words, specific self – transcendence takes place, influenced by his spiritual – mental life. The beginning of life is described in the Bible as “the breath of life” – *niszmat hajjim* and *nefes hajjah* – “a living soul” (Gen 2, 7), which concerns a human soul understood as a unity of man in the encyclopedic approach. Jerome H. Neyrey refers to this notion when he claims that the Hebrews “were living bodies rather than having bodies”.⁹ The semantic sense of this term was changed by Book of Wisdom 9,15, which introduced the notion of soul in its Greek meaning. This is how the dualism between body and soul came into being.¹⁰

As the history of anthropology indicates, when people tried to define and describe humankind, this aspect was strongly emphasized whereas carnality was depreciated. This tendency is apparent especially in Gnostic and Manichean movements. It is contrary to materialism mentioned above, and is called spiritualism.¹¹

While analyzing the biblical act of *creatio*, one should realize the total aspect of man's materiality, together with his complete endowment (the human being from the biblical narrative demonstrates full activity of outer and inner senses) which undergoes development. We can also see entirety of his psychological life with its laws and relationships. The manifestation of this aspect of life can be noticed in the

⁷ Cf. A. Scola, *Osoba ludzka. Antropologia teologiczna*, Poznań 2005, p. 158.

⁸ Cf. S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek w myśli współczesnej*, Warszawa 1990. The author compares and analyses materialistic views in anthropology and devotes his attention to a few trends which stem from anthropology and philosophy. There are the following movements: materialistic and sociological (L. Feuerbach, K. Marks, F. Engels); materialistic and mechanistic (B. Russel, C. Lévi-Strauss, T. Kotarbiński); materialistic and vitalistic (F. Nietzsche, S. Freud). In their discussion on human nature and structure, all of them restrict themselves to the materialistic dimension which is the basis of every human action. *Ibid.*; K. Marks, *Rękopisy ekonomiczno-filozoficzne*, [in:] Marks – Engels, *Dziela*, Warszawa 1960, vol. 1, p. 575–580.

⁹ J. H. Neyrey, *Dusza*, [in:] *Encyklopedia biblijna*, ed. P. J. Achtemeier, trans. E. Szymula, Warszawa 1999, p. 219.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹ Cf. A. Scola, *Osoba ludzka*, p. 159.

analysis of man's relation to God, other people, himself and the surrounding world. Man gets to know these realms by his relationships towards them and by making a choice (cf. Gen 1, 28–30; 2, 19–20. 23. 25; 3, 6; 3, 8–20). All these events prove human rationality the whole sphere of volition. This approach to man in his structure is represented by Hans Urs von Balthasar and Luis F. Ladaria who refer to Clement of Alexandria and Origen.¹²

The analysis of the Book of Genesis leads to the discovery of another aspect of human life, very important from the point of view of anthropology. It is a relationship between man – a physical, rational and free being – and God, who is a spirit and reveals Himself through the whole work of *creatio*. Biblical texts indicate that man is aware of his dependence on God, simultaneously however, he makes an attempt of self – determination which is a kind of self-creation. The relationship with God has its source in the external experience (man listens to God, expresses his needs and hides from Him) and, at the same time, goes beyond human rationality and volition. God cannot be known fully by a human, while the human is not a mystery for God. (cf. Gen 2, 15–18. 21–22; 3, 9–19). Therefore, this meeting must take place beyond rationality, though with its active participation.¹³ The anthropology of John of the Cross is useful for understanding this notion. According to him, a meeting with God happens in a sphere which he calls the “profound essence of the soul”; “essence of the spirit”; “depth of the soul” and “centre of the soul”. In his anthropology he departs from strictly Thomistic views and follows the concepts of St. Augustine. In such a way we deal with the structural element which is called “spirit” (Lat. *spiritus*).¹⁴

The aforementioned structural elements reveal the entire capacity of human development. Man, aiming at full humanity, enters into an intimate relationship with God. It can be noticed that this growth cannot take place only on the physical, mental or intellectual level. All the spheres are very important aspects of human life, but they constitute only part of it. Pursuing sanctity has its common element in spirituality which forms human eternity.

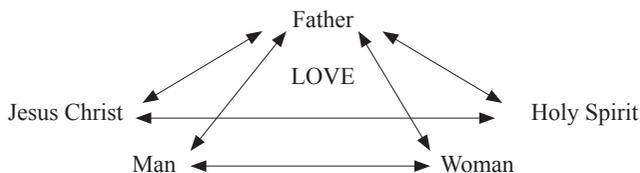
¹² Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *W pełni prawdy*, trans. J. Fenerychowa, Kraków 1991, p. 93–94; L. F. Ladaria, *Wprowadzenie do antropologii teologicznej*, trans. A. Baron, Kraków 1997, p. 52.

¹³ Cf. M. A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, Oxford 1998, p. 106–109. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 82, a. 3, c; St. Thomas Aquinas advocates the priority of intellect stemming from the nature of the two human powers. However, he accentuates that a will sometimes should be attributed more perfect operations. Such situations take place when the object desired by a will is greater than the intellect, as in the case of the love of God, which is greater than the ability to know Him. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Cf. Św. Jan od Krzyża, *Pieśń duchowa*, 1, 6; *Droga na Górę Karmel*, II, 17, 6; *Noc ciemna*, II, 23, 4; *Żywy płomień miłości*, 1, 1; 1, 12; 4, 14; A. Ruszała, *Ze świętym Janem od Krzyża ku zjednoczeniu z Bogiem*, Kraków 1999, p. 66.

Man as an androgynous, i.e. social being

The analysis of biblical texts (cf. Gen 1, 27; 2, 21–23; 5, 1–2) implies one more aspect which is important from the anthropological point of view: a call of man to being as male and female. The call to humankind has its own structure and is a is an inherent part and implementation of being human. As implied from the Revelation, the relation to God has always been connected with the relationship of a man and a woman¹⁵. This truth was emphasized by St. Thomas Aquinas who, referring to the biblical act of creation, stressed their equal dependence on God and also their diversity in equality as full personality¹⁶. A deepened analysis of the text of the Bible is necessary to understand this issue. The fragment of Gen 5, 1–2 presents one more element which is important for the discussion. The call of man into being is simultaneous with giving a common name “people” (plural *adamim*). This fact precedes the determination of their sexes: *isz* – a man and *iszsza* – a woman. The two sexes meet in this single term: *adamim*¹⁷. The Bible does not perceive the existence of two sexes as degradation. On the contrary, it is interpreted as a manifestation of the free and loving will of God and is described as “very good” (Gen 1, 31). Therefore, sexuality is not an opponent of a human, but the beauty of creative differentiation, enabling the human to participate in God’s work as a co-creator. It is an invitation to the trinitarian communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The community of the Holy Trinity is at the same time the community of man. A human community strives for a sanctifying union with God on the basis of its creative equipment and divine grace. Therefore, we can make an attempt to outline a figure depicting this relational spirituality which stems from femininity and masculinity, having their source in God.



¹⁵ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich*, Lublin 1987, p. 27.

¹⁶ Cf. Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, ed. F. W. Bednarski, Warszawa 2000, q. 92, a. 2, p. 125. St. Thomas states: “It was more suitable for the woman to be made from the man [...] to give the first man a certain dignity, so that just as God is the principle of the whole universe, so the first man, in the likeness of God, was the principle of the whole human race [...]. Secondly, that man might love woman all the more, and cleave to her more closely, knowing her to be fashioned from himself” (q. 92, a. 3, p. 126). “It was right for the woman to be made from the rib of man. First, to signify the social union of man and woman, for the woman should neither use authority over man, and so she was not made from the head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man’s contempt as his slave, so she was not made from his feet (!!!).” Ibid.

¹⁷ Cf. C. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka*, vol. 1, p. 311.

Two sexes cannot be perceived as two complementary halves. Each of the persons called into being by God is independent and complete. Each of them develops their own personality as well as ontic and moral sanctity. However, it should be underlined that in their existence they are compatible (*compatibility* means existing together in harmony) but they are not complementary (complementarity – Latin *complementum* – complement, supplement). A. Scola elaborates on this idea using the term *reciprocity*, which is not asymmetric and leads to the discovery of each other as a mutual gift. In this way the other becomes a grace.¹⁸

The *creatio* of man as male and female highlights one more important structural and subjective element, that is, a relationship with others which constitutes the foundation for a community of people. Following A. Läßle's interpretation, we can say that here we find the real foundation of human unity in all the diversity. The other person becomes the source of discovery of one's own identity at the moment of the creation: "This [is] now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2, 21–23). This is how the first human community originated. From the psychological – personalistic point of view, we can find a variety of studies on this issue by authors such as F. Ebner, M. Buber, Rosenzweig, Gogarten and Brunner. However, a theory called "Self"¹⁹, proposed by G. H. Mead († 1931) and based on the views of M. Scheller, is of special importance.

The primitive human community, which is unified by a common creation and common structure, is at the same time manifested in action. God's call on humankind to multiply and cooperate in creating the world is clearly expressed in the Bible (Gen 1, 28). Commenting on this fragment, Alfred Läßle states that "Thanks to the existence of two sexes people are able to become cooperators and assistants of God the Creator in its most real and true sense".²⁰ Consequently, we can observe *creatio continua*, which is a constant creation of man and the world. This fact reveals the dignity as well as subjectivity of man. In the approaches of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karol Wojtyła, it is the action as co-creation which reveals human subjectivity, expressed in rationality and freedom.²¹

Man – God's "image and likeness" (Gen 1, 26)

This term from the Elohist text refers to the prototype genealogy of humanity that exists in God. This biblical narrative has always been very inspiring and intriguing for early Christian writers and theologians. For example, it was addressed

¹⁸ A. Scola, *Osoba ludzka*, p. 187–188.

¹⁹ Cf. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, Chicago 1934.

²⁰ A. Läßle, *Od Księgi Rodzaju do Ewangelii*, p. 73.

²¹ Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Teologika. Duch Prawdy*, vol. 3., trans. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 2005, p. 375; K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*”, p. 77, 91.

by apologist Tatian and later by Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory of Nyssa, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine.²² The diversity of authors, ideas, and views illustrates the variety of emphases in the interpretations of this “image and likeness”. God’s image (*selem, eikon, imago*) and likeness (*demuth, homoiosis, similitudo*) in the patristic period were identified with each other and treated as synonyms, especially by Western Fathers. However, it should be stressed that St. Augustine used the term *selem* also to refer the humankind’s condition after sin, thus it denotes also our ontology. By emphasizing *demuth*, St. Irenaeus distinguished charitological, supernatural likeness from moral likeness, which is marred by sin. In the history of thought there were instances of identifying image and likeness.²³ Apart from this tendency, the two notions were often differentiated. Clement of Alexandria initiated an analysis of this distinction. However, *selem – eikon* has often been identified with sensuality, and *demuth – homoiosis* has been identified with spiritual likeness gained by man.²⁴

John Meyendorff, who addressed this issue in the history of Byzantium, states that this issue should be examined in the context of divine life in man, which is a gift and also responsibility stemming from his cooperation with God. Therefore, two elements existing in man should be noticed: one of them is static, permanent, unalterable, and it should be labeled as a gift, and the other one is dynamic – coming into being. According to the author, the second element (*homoiosis*) describes the dynamic growth based on human freedom.²⁵ For St. Thomas, cognition and the ability to love are compatible and form the two aspects of life which are fundamental in the process of becoming similar to God. At the same time he states that the whole man gets involved in this process and that is why the whole man is present in the biblical description. Also, St. Thomas distinguishes between “image”, which he identifies with human mind, and “likeness”, which is present in other spheres in the form of “tracks”. This distinction is examined and testified in art. 9 of his *Summa Theologica*.²⁶

Taking into account the integrity of a human person it should be stated that the unification of man and God, which has its source in His will towards humanity, takes place in a close cooperation with Him. The whole created man enters this sanctifying relationship, because his whole life aims at full sanctity. The theology of St. Paul (cf. 2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15–20) has a special meaning in this respect. Jesus Christ is the way towards this union, as its cause, model and aim. In the mystery of His Person we discover the “image and likeness”, because He is the personification of full and perfect humanity. Therefore, the whole Christian spirituality must be Christocentric

²² Cf. W. Granat, *Fenomen człowieka...*, p. 114.

²³ Cf. A. Scola, *Osoba ludzka*, p. 154–157.

²⁴ Cf. T. Špidlik, *Duchowość chrześcijańskiego wschodu*, trans. L. Rodziewicz, Kraków 2005, p. 86.

²⁵ Cf. J. Meyendorff, *Teologia bizantyjska*, trans. J. Prokopiuk, Warszawa 1984, p. 178–181.

²⁶ Cf. Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna w skrócie*, a. 6, p. 127; a. 9, p. 128.

and at the same time Christoformic, i.e., concentrated on the person of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, shaped by Him with the cooperation of man.

The analysis of the biblical act of the creation of man, with special attention to its structure, is very important for the whole Christian theology including anthropology. It is the foundation for formulating a definition of man. The attempts to define man in his essence play a crucial role in the present world affected by subjectivity, individualism, hedonism and horizontalism. These tendencies reveal, first of all, a crisis on the anthropological ground. The structure, resulting from the supernatural, biblical vision, offers a vast perspective for Christian spirituality, which – in cooperation with other fields of science – leads a human to his full sanctity.

Summary

Structure of man in the biblical act of Creation

The question about man, his origin, structure, place, and role in the world, relation to others and his ultimate goal, belongs to fundamental categories. In his pursuits, man constantly tries to find the right answer to this important question. The basis of this analysis forms the structure of man resulting from the act of creation as described in the Bible. In the Old Testament we have two texts about the proctology of man: Yahwistic (Gen 2, 4b–24) and Elohist (Gen 1, 26–28). Both Angelo Scola and Luis F. Ladaria see the ultimate structural view of humankind in the person of Jesus Christ. That is why the Old Testament texts concerning creation are fully implemented in the mystery of Incarnation and Redemption. The name “a human” itself there is a claim about the greatness of his nature (cataphasis). Observation and experience indicate also his limitations (apophasis). Therefore, it can be stated that in the human nature there must be integrity (henosis) in this respect constituting the basis of his whole humanity. Biblical texts indicate that man is aware of his dependence on God, simultaneously however, he makes an attempt of self–determination which is a kind of self–creation. The relationship with God has its source in the external experience (man listens to God, expresses his needs and hides from Him) and, at the same time, goes beyond human rationality and volition. It is an invitation to the trinitarian communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The community of the Holy Trinity is at the same time the community of man. The *creatio* of man as male and female highlights one more important structural and subjective element, that is, a relationship with others which constitutes the foundation for a community of people. Jesus Christ is the way towards this union, as its cause, model and aim. In the mystery of His Person we discover the “image and likeness”, because He is the personification of full and perfect humanity. Therefore, the whole Christian spirituality must be Christocentric and at the same time Christoformic. The attempts to define man in his essence play a crucial role in the present world affected by subjectivity, individualism, hedonism and horizontalism.

Keywords

Bible, Creation, Jesus Christ, man, nature, Old Testament