

Piotr Stanisław Mazur

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6399-8133>

Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie

The Paradoxes of Person – Some Remarks

The relationship between paradox and person has a long history. The term “person” in philosophy first came into use at the end of antiquity in an attempt at unravelling the paradoxes of Christian faith, and was later introduced into the field of anthropology. While it did not undermine the Greek concept of man as a living and rational being (*animal rationale*), it led to its reinterpretation. Under the influence of religion, the discrepancy

in the way man used to be understood between those characteristics that make him more like other beings and those that highlight his difference from them became increasingly clear. The tension between these different properties has found its expression in paradoxes. Today, the problem of the paradoxes of person is rarely discussed in philosophical, or even personalist literature. Compared to many other paradoxes, even individual ones, which are the subject of major disputes, their discussion is marginal. And yet, without considering the paradoxes of person, it is not possible to understand the specificity of man’s existence.

Piotr Stanisław Mazur, Ph. D., Professor extraordinary – a philosopher, a poet, a head of the Department of Philosophy of Being, Man and Society at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Cracow. He has published, inter alia: *Intelekt człowieka* (Lublin 2004); *W kręgu pytań o człowieka* (Lublin 2008); *Prowidencja ludzka jako podstawa roztropnego formowania zasad życia osobowego i społecznego człowieka* (Lublin 2009); *O polską kulturę humanistyczną* (Lublin 2011); *Zarys podstaw filozofii człowieka. Antropologiczne zastosowanie metody separacji* (Kraków 2016); *Metafizyka istnienia człowieka* (Kraków 2018).

Remarks on the Historical Aspect

The problem of personhood first appeared in philosophy as it attempted to solve two theological paradoxes. One was related to Jesus Christ, the other – to the Holy Trinity. Since the historical Jesus considered himself both human and divine, he must have had two natures; and consequently either one of them was only apparent, or else they represented two different beings. As regards the Holy Trinity, the revealed message said that God was both one and triform (John 15:26). Consequently, either the Trinity as one substance is a single being, which means that the difference between the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit is only apparent, or the difference is real, which means there are three existentially separate deities.

Early Christian thinkers did not reject the traditional categories of substance (*ousía*, *hypóstasis*), nature (*phýsis*), and essence (*éidos*) which Greek thinkers used to describe beings.¹ As they sought to rationalize the revealed message about Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity, they found it necessary to review the existing metaphysical notions, however, which said that a particular being, as a single substance, has one essence and thus one nature. The solution turned out to be the introduction of an additional concept and, along with it, a differentiation in substance which made it possible to find a way out of the emerging paradoxes. The Council of Chalcedon (451) refers in its documents to the concept of person (*prosópon*) that had so far been used in art, where it meant the role played by an actor, and language, whose grammatical structure allowed for the same entity to be referred to differently depending on whether one was speaking of oneself, whether someone else was speaking to them, or whether they were being spoken of by someone else. The category of person (*prosópon*, *hypóstasis*) justified saying that Christ, as a divine person with a divine nature, became man by accepting

¹ The theoretical tools developed in Platonism and Aristotelianism proved insufficient to cope with theological paradoxes. It was only by introducing the concept of person that it was possible to rationalize the revealed message.

human nature with all its existential constituents: body and soul. Once it was accepted that Jesus Christ as a man was a person, it was now only a matter of time before the personal status was extended to every human being. The diversity within the Trinity as a single substance of one divine nature was explained, on the other hand, by the differences between persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the relationships between them.²

The introduction of the term “person” into philosophy brought with it some unexpected anthropological consequences. On the one hand, it integrated and, in a sense, gave a name to what had been perceived much earlier in the understanding of man. “If self-awareness, identity and relationality are constitutive for the existence of persons, then – as confirmed by literary texts – we may talk of an extensive pre-philosophical awareness of human personality present already in antiquity.”³ On the other hand, the concept of person is linked to the Christian context of understanding man. Man, while being subject to the natural order, was distinguished from it as a person because of his special relationship to God, emphasizing his individuality and his axiological position. Crucial in this context was the recognition of both the transcendence of a person and universality of the personal status expressed in the belief that every person as an individual being has the opportunity to be saved and see God face to face.⁴ Philosophical reflection throughout history, beginning with Tertullian and Boethius, sought

² See R. Spaemann, *Person. The Difference between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something’*, transl. O. O’Donovan, Oxford 2017, p. 23–29.

³ B. Wald, *Substantialität und Personalität. Philosophie der Person in Antike und Mittelalter*, Paderborn 2005, p. 9.

⁴ Recognition of the universality of man’s personal status was not only due to religious reasons. According to Berthold Wald, there is a significant difference in the way the basic criteria of personhood were approached in antiquity and in modern times. In ancient times, they were not treated as separate, but as belonging to the ontic characteristics proper to man. A direct reference to the analysis of acts of personal life, however, made the issues of self-awareness and personal identity central to the modern theory of personhood. As the ontic understanding of personal characteristics was abandoned for the phenomenological approach, certainly about the existence of other persons became undermined. See B. Wald, *Substantialität und Personalität. Philosophie der Person in Antike und Mittelalter*, op. cit., p. 10–12.

to reveal this personal uniqueness. This helped identify a wide range of the characteristics of a personal being:

Whether it is the definition of personhood deriving from Roman law, *persona est sui iuris et alteri incommunicabilis* (“a person is a being which belongs to itself and which does not share its being with another”), or Aquinas’ teaching that a person is never a mere part in any whole but a whole of its own, or Kant’s teaching that each person is an end in himself, or any of the many accounts of personhood in terms of freedom: wherever we look we find some variation on the theme of independence, autonomy, belonging to oneself, existing for one’s own sake, living out of one’s interiority, acting through oneself, determining oneself – in a word, some variation on the theme of *selfhood*⁵.

As the definition of the characteristics of a person (proper to personhood) gained in precision, the tension between those aspects of human existence that may be attributed to both man and other beings (nature) and those that are unique to man alone became more explicit. If a person is existentially uncommunicable (separate and non-transmittable), he manifests himself against the background of what is communicable in him.⁶ If it is pointed out, on the other hand, that a person is a whole or that he is an end, it is in opposition to his being a part or a means, respectively. Similarly, when conceiving of a person holistically, as an entity autonomous in existence and action, he is opposed to beings which do not have such autonomy. The actual existence of characteristics

⁵ J. F. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, Washington, D.C. 1996, p. 1.

⁶ While in the beginnings of personalism, non-communicability and the distinctness it entails were considered an essential characteristic of personhood, in the 20th century it was precisely communicability (dialogue) that became essential for representatives of this trend. Regardless of this internal discussion within the broadly understood personalist current, it is worth noting that these properties always become pronounced in opposition to each other: non-communicability (non-transmissibility of existence) manifests itself in relation to what can be communicated, and what can be communicated contrasts in man and other beings with that which is non-communicable.

determining the uniqueness of a person is ascertained in opposition to non-personal beings which do not have such properties.⁷

The paradoxes of personhood came into view in a particular historical and systemic context. However, one could hardly say that the context was what brought them about. Indeed, it highlighted the tensions and oppositions inherent in man, of which the pre-Christian thinkers were already well aware. Modern personalists generally agree on four basic paradoxes, including the opposition between existence (being a person) and becoming; non-communicability and communicability; overtness (knowability) and covertness (unknowability); being a whole and being a part.⁸ They do not limit the number of the paradoxes of person, but neither do they try to expand it; they mainly emphasize their significance.

By analyzing these paradoxes, Vittorio Possenti stresses that the human subject is a person in the ontic aspect, but should also become one in the aspect of action, by actualizing that which is potentialized in his personal life, that is, the intellectual, moral and emotional spheres. In the human person, the ontological non-transmissibility of existence also contrasts with intentional transmissibility – the communicability of the human person who, through acts of knowledge and love, enters into relationships with other beings. According to the Italian philosopher, a person in relation to reality is not a part, but a whole – a kind of microcosm in which the macrocosm is reflected. He exists individually and

⁷ Bundle theories of personhood refer to a mobility of its characteristics (man has the characteristics of a person or not depending on whether he performs acts from which such characteristics are inferred), and their gradability (some characteristics are held by various personal and non-personal beings, but to varying degrees). According to Derek Parfit, a person's subjective identity is fluid. See D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford 1984.

⁸ These oppositions are pointed to by Jean Mouroux (see J. Mouroux, *The Meaning of Man*, transl. A. H. C. Downes, London 1948, p. 115–142), Joseph F. Donceel (see Joseph F. Donceel, *Philosophical Anthropology*, New York 1967, p. 460–463), Vittorio Possenti (see V. Possenti, *Il nuovo principio persona*, Roma 2013, p. 93–100), Grzegorz Hołub (see G. Hołub, *Osoba ludzka: pomiędzy paradoksem a wieloaspektowością istnienia*, in: *Spór o osobę w świetle klasycznej koncepcji człowieka. Studia i rozprawy*, red. P. S. Mazur, Kraków 2012, p. 185–205). Some references to these paradoxes and to the overall paradoxicality of personhood are clearly present in the anthropology of Robert Spaemann who is probably the most explicit about the paradoxicality of personhood (see R. Spaemann, *Person. The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'*, op. cit.).

experiences the finiteness of his existence, while at the same time being open to the whole of reality, to infinity. Yet another paradox, according to Possenti, is the cognitive overtness and covertness of a person who, as a spiritual being, reveals himself through his body, while at the same time being non-transparent, and thus non-knowable, either to others or to himself. One more paradox analyzed by Possenti becomes apparent in man's relationship to society. Man is a part of society, but a part understood as an autonomous and independent whole, having a dignity of purpose and a purpose of existence that is transcendent with respect to the community. As a person, he is more perfect than his species.⁹

For thinkers who study the problem of paradoxes, the historical or logical aspects do not matter much, which does not mean they are not aware of their existence. In principle, they focus on their systematic interpretation, treating them as a special vehicle of knowledge about a person. Some of them see in paradoxes mostly a manifestation of man's existential structure (Mouroux, Donceel), while others – a manifestation of the unique and cognitively unfathomable way of personal existence (Possenti, Hołub).

Remarks on the Logical-Epistemological Aspect

Etymologically, the paradox is what is “contrary to (*para*) received opinion or belief (*doxa*),” as well as something unexpected, unbelievable, contrary to popular opinion, unforeseen considering the existing knowledge, or even false. Paradoxically, therefore, the paradox may be defined as “an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises.”¹⁰ Some paradoxes are antinomies. An antinomy is a contradiction in reasoning which consists in that, starting with unchallengeable premises

⁹ See V. Possenti, *Il nuovo principio persona*, op. cit., p. 93–100.

¹⁰ R. M. Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, New York 2009, p. 1.

and correct rules of inference, we arrive at a contradiction.¹¹ The term paradox may be considered more general than antinomy. While two equally well-founded statements whose conjunction is unacceptable may be called a paradox, “antinomy” only means a paradox in which equally well-founded claims are mutually contradictory.¹²

If the judgements that make up an antinomy were both true at the same time, this would have far-reaching consequences, not only logical, but metaphysical ones as well. A contradiction would apply not only to the judgements, but also to what they refer to.¹³ The logical consequence would be the existence of conflicting properties in a particular being, meaning that it has them and does not have them at the same time. On the other hand, if one of the judgements that make it up were false, the antinomy would be apparent. We should then be speaking not of antinomy, but of paralogism.¹⁴ While treating the paradoxes of person as an antinomy would lead to agnosticism resulting from the fact that a particular characteristic is both attributed and denied to a person, considering them a paralogism would result in the attribution or denial of a characteristic to a person being considered an error (fallacy). An antinomy indicates an error in cognition consisting in the discovery

¹¹ See M. Lechniak, *Antynomia*, in: *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, t. 1, red. A. Maryniarczyk, Lublin 2000, p. 273.

¹² In the logical aspect, the paradox can also be understood even more broadly when it covers all situations in which, in the same procedure or in equally reliable procedures, mutually incompatible results are obtained (assertions, imperatives, orders, judgments).

¹³ Referring to Łukasiewicz's studies on the principle of contradiction in Aristotle, it is worth noting his proposed distinction between the principle of contradiction in the ontological (“to no object can the same characteristic belong and not belong at the same time”), logical (“two conflicting [contradictory] propositions cannot be true at the same time”) and psychological sense (“two acts of believing which correspond to two contradictory propositions cannot obtain in the same consciousness”). J. Łukasiewicz, *On the Principle of Contradiction in Aristotle*, “The Review of Metaphysics” 24 (1971) 3, p. 488. A more extensive discussion of this problem can be found in his *O zasadzie sprzeczności u Arystotelesa* (Kraków 1910). Cf. P. Joray, *The Principle of Contradiction and Ecsthesis in Aristotle's Syllogistic*, “History and Philosophy of Logic” 35 (2014) 3, p. 219–236.

¹⁴ Paralogism is “reasoning burdened by a logical error” (K. Szymanek, *Paralogizm i sofizm*, in: *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, t. 8, red. A. Maryniarczyk, Lublin 2007, p. 20), which differs from sophistry only in intention. Sophistry, as argued by Aristotle, consists in the deliberate use of paralogism in order to establish a false view.

of its limits, while paralogism points to the unfoundedness of the problem – a pseudoproblem. The question therefore arises whether antinomy and paralogism exhaust all logical possibilities of treating the paradoxes of personhood? The answer largely depends on whether they can be confined to reasoning, language and cognition, or whether they go beyond this dimension.

The paradoxes of person can formally be described as antinomies, that is, as pairs of contradictory sentences, each of which demands that it be considered true. The truthfulness of these sentences is based on reasoning that is ultimately established on man's experience of his essential properties as a person. Thus, it is the ontological context that ultimately makes it possible to determine the truthfulness of those sentences and the nature of the opposition between them – meaning that a person simultaneously possesses certain properties and does not possess them, or pointing to a contradiction in his similar but not identical properties. The paradoxes of person do not, however, serve to demonstrate a contradiction of properties, and thus a contradiction inherent in a person as a being or as an existing subject. Clearly, they are more about the affirmation of properties that are very similar, yet not identical. Man is a person in the aspect of being in himself, but must become one in the aspect of being for himself; he is an actual part of community, but at the same time a whole – a being that is complete in terms of the species he belongs to; he is a being that is uncommunicable ontically, but communicable deliberately; finally, he is cognitively overt (knowable), but knowable only to a limited extent (remaining concealed – a mystery). It seems that the paradoxes of person spring from the problems with precise use of language. In linguistic (semantic) paradoxes, the levels of language (terms of objective language and metalingual expressions) become confused, or terms are used incorrectly (fuzziness, indistinctness, ambiguity). Therefore, in some paradoxes of person one can see the effect of ambiguous terms (e.g. communicability – non-communicability), and in others the result of fuzzy terms that are their subject matter (openness-covertness, part-whole, existence-becoming).

With the assertion that the paradoxes of person are not, in fact, antinomies comes the question of whether they are not paralogsms – unsubstantiated, but misleading as to who a person is. In literature, a distinction can still be found between Quine's true (veridical) paradoxes, false (falsidical) paradoxes, and antinomies.¹⁵ Smilansky adds to this a fourth kind of paradox, complementing the first one – the existential paradox that is „true and really paradoxical.”¹⁶ In his view, in this kind of paradox the reason for the error lies neither in the assumptions nor in the reasoning which leads to a false conclusion, but in the reality to which that conclusion relates. This paradox is not a logical error, but reveals in the “moral and personal reality” some kind of “absurdity.”¹⁷ This “absurdity” makes it possible to look at paradoxes and the paradoxes of person from a different perspective. The oppositions revealed in the form of a paradox are not necessarily the result of limitations of the human mind, but may, to some extent, be inherent in reality.¹⁸ This would mean that some of them are not the result of errors in thinking or the use of language, but reflect the fact that this thinking and language, precisely because of their ambiguous (analogous) nature, manifest the paradoxicality present in the way of existence, which should not right away be identified with contradiction. If the individual characteristics of a person indicated in the paradoxes are real, then the opposition between them is real as well, which means that they occur in the person, and not only in thinking or knowledge about the person, if the person himself is considered a fact. While the actual existence of the paradoxes of person can be challenged by refuting the concept of person, the experience which supports them cannot be denied. Man will still keep experiencing

¹⁵ See W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, New York 1966, p. 3–20. In veridical paradoxes, the apparent absurdity turns out to be true; in falsidical ones – there is a contradiction with a self-evident truth given in universal experience; in antinomies – two equally reliable statements are mutually contradictory. Cf. D. Olin, *Paradox*, Chesham 2003, p. 12–14; W. G. Lycan, *What, exactly, is a paradox?*, “Analysis” 70 (2010) 4, p. 615–622.

¹⁶ S. Smilansky, *10 Moral Paradoxes*, Malden 2007, p. 4.

¹⁷ S. Smilansky, *10 Moral Paradoxes*, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁸ This does not necessarily mean that reality must be inherently contradictory, contrary to what was claimed by Hegel.

in his existence a tension between who he is and who he is becoming, between his overtness and covertness, communicability and non-communicability (non-transmittability), the sense of being a whole and the sense of being a part of something greater. These tensions are indelible from human existence, although they do not have to be accompanied by an existential drama.

According to Cargile, the essential feature of a paradox is conflict.¹⁹ In the paradoxes of person, a conflict occurs as well; it does not result, however, from the incompatibility of a judgement about a person with a prevailing belief about him. Neither is it the result of an error in the criteria of organizing knowledge about the person. Of the types of conflict distinguished by Cargile, the paradoxes of person are the closest to antinomy. The problem that arises, however, is concerned with what the conflict is and where it is located if it does not indicate a contradiction, but only some opposition akin to one? Clearly, this conflict concerns judgements relating to states of affairs, which is what Smilansky has in mind speaking of the existential paradox. This is precisely how Possenti understands them, saying that the paradoxes of person "... are expressed in statements that are true and at the same time appear to be in conflict. They reflect situations where it seems that a thing and its opposite are equally true."²⁰ Thus, the paradoxes are expressed in judgements, but formulated under the influence of certain states of affairs and relating to those states of affairs. Such paradoxes cannot be removed using logical tools, because judgements and reasoning do not generate, but reveal them. These paradoxes are an expression of knowledge, which in turn raises the problem of how they are known.

¹⁹ According to Cargile, this may be a conflict between a particular statement and a generally accepted opinion, such as Socrates' belief that no one ever intentionally does evil. The conflict may also arise between statements that have been or are considered fundamental truths, e.g. Kant's paradoxes concerning the world (antinomy). Finally, the conflict may result from a violation of pre-defined classification criteria. This kind of collision creates a new fact that challenges the existing classification, e.g. the paradoxicality of REM sleep, which has both the characteristics of wakefulness and sleep at the same time. See J. Cargile, *Paradoxes*, in: *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. T. Honderich, Oxford 2005, p. 678–680.

²⁰ V. Possenti, *Il nuovo principio persona*, op. cit., p. 97.

According to Hołub, individual paradoxes are learned by successively identifying the characteristics that constitute a paradox.²¹ As we compare various properties of the person as a subject, we begin to see that simultaneous affirmation of some of them leads to a paradox. However, this is not the complete explanation of how they come to be cognitively captured. An essential condition for paradoxicality is perceiving a similarity in aspects (analogy) between those opposite properties of a person which represent two extreme poles of the paradox. However, paradoxes do not consist merely in the perception of a simple analogy between them. The properties that are the poles of the paradox must manifest themselves as aspectively similar and opposite enough to evoke a belief, expressed in a more or less explicit judgment, about a contradiction between them. It is only when the extreme opposition of certain properties and their clear and undeniable similarity in aspect become apparent to us through cognition that we recognize a paradox. Such recognition does not produce the paradoxes of person, but reveals them. Ultimately, however, it has ontic rather than epistemic roots, as the properties captured in a paradox are manifestly anchored in things (*cum fundamentum in re*) instead of being cognitively generated by the subject. Explanations of these paradoxes should therefore be sought in the way a person exists, which requires an analysis of their systematic aspect.

Remarks on the Systematic Aspect

Since the paradoxes of personhood, made apparent in language and cognition, are not antinomies or paralogsms, they should be treated as aporias – doubts or difficulties which call for a subjective explanation.²² This means that their “solution” should be sought in the way a person exists, while distinguishing between actual and potential existence.

²¹ See G. Hołub, *Osoba ludzka: pomiędzy paradoksem a wieloaspektowością istnienia*, op. cit., p. 203.

²² The aporetic nature of the paradoxes of personhood have certain consequences. Aporia, which appears not only in philosophy, does not signal unsolvable problems, but opens up the possibility of more efficient and effective philosophizing. See R. A. Younis, *Euporia: On the Limits, Horizons*

Potential existence is the focus of ontological paradoxes which, as a result of strong theoretical assumptions, take the form of paralogisms. Meanwhile, the causes of the paradoxes of person should be looked for in the actual opposition between characteristics or states of being.²³ As such, they require an appropriate identification and explanation, and the ultimate explanation would also require an answer to the question “why?,” that is to say, a proportional reason for which a particular paradox occurs in a person and only in a person.²⁴ Paradoxes raise questions not only about their cause, but also about their specific nature or significance for our understanding of existence, assuming its non-contradictoriness. These questions signal that in the paradoxes of personhood there is a certain cognitive potential, which may be as essential for the understanding of person as the ancient paradoxes were essential for a more comprehensive account of reality.

The first systematic problem to be tackled is that the paradoxes of person are revealed only in the existence of a person. And yet, the dog now running down the street is also becoming, in some respects, as an existing being; it is an individual specimen and at the same time a part of its species; is incommunicable in its existence, but at the same time communicates with reality in its proper way; and is similarly overt to cognition, and yet not fully knowable. One can hardly assume that thinkers studying the paradoxes of personhood are not aware of this similarity, and yet they attribute paradoxicality only to the person. This means that, in their opinion, what is a paradox in the case of a person is not a paradox in the case of other material beings, even if the analogy is self-evident. The paradoxicality of personhood cannot, therefore, result merely from the fact that certain properties of a person stand in opposition to one another. The oppositions inherent in a person must have a more fundamental

and Possibilities of Critique (or: On Reconstruction), “Reconstructing Social Theory, History and Practice” 35 (2017); <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S0278-12042016000035003>, (12.12.2016), p. 100.

²³ The existential paradox is metaphysical, while the paradox of God’s omnipotence, for example, is ontological.

²⁴ Such an explanation is supported by traditional metaphysics, which makes it necessary to accept its assumptions and methods, however.

and radical dimension to allow for specific paradoxes to be formulated on their basis. The only explanation is the recognition that the specific oppositions underlying the paradoxes go along the axis of immanence – transcendence, or immanence/transcendence – transcendence, so at least one property of personhood in a given opposition manifests itself as different from the analogous property found in non-personal beings.²⁵ Thus, already on the phenomenal level a difference is revealed between becoming, existential non-communicability, unknowability and being a whole in a person and in an impersonal being.

If the paradoxes of person are considered aporias, then the question arises as to what their solution (*euporia*) might be. Aristotle removed aporias associated with ontic paradoxes by pointing to the inherent complexities of being. Having perceived the aporias of identity and change, or movement and rest, Aristotle developed his theory of compounds of form and matter, actuality and potentiality, substance and accidents. The opposite properties were for the Greek thinker the result of the inner compounds of being. The paradoxes of person, however, cannot be interpreted as compounds. Every compound can be described as made up of an actuality and a potentiality, while the oppositions which make up paradoxes are not arranged into an actuality-potentiality relationship. However, this does not rule out the possibility that the paradoxes of person are derivatives of ontic compounds. And this is the solution which thinkers who analyze the paradoxes of person are most inclined to. For Maroux and Donceel, the paradoxes of person are a manifestation of an anthropological dualism. The opposing properties of a person arise from the fact that he is both a spiritual and a bodily being. And it is in the paradoxes of person that the opposition can be seen between corporeal and spiritual properties.

Hofub, on the other hand, sees paradoxicality also in the very spiritual and bodily structure of personhood, focusing on the way in which a person exists. In his opinion, a person cannot be explained in terms

²⁵ This direction is followed by interpretations proposed by the personalist thinkers mentioned above.

of “a simple unity of structures, traits and properties,” manifested as an eclectic bundle of characteristics. They must be seen as parts of a larger whole. Paradoxes are embedded in the ontic structure of the person as a substantial subject who manifests himself through his diversified attributes. A person needs all their diversity “in order to actualize and communicate the potentiality of his or her personal existence.”²⁶ In this approach, the question of a person’s inner non-contradictoriness and unity of being prevails over that which results from the paradoxes of personhood. Although paradoxes express an opposition between the person’s characteristics, as attributes they are non-contradictory and understandable in the light of the substantial unity of the subject. Their opposition is due to the multiplicity and diversity of the person’s potentiality through which the complexity, or rather the multifacetedness of his existence is manifested. However, the question of what the paradoxes of personhood say about a person precisely as paradoxes remains open. An attempt at understanding a person in the context of these paradoxes calls for an answer to the question of why these paradoxes do not occur in beings other than persons.

Ontic paradoxes, such as the paradox of identity and change, apply to all beings, while in the case of person there are paradoxes that are superposed, so to say, onto the former ones. Moreover, in the paradoxes of person there is a certain tension between the opposite properties of personhood. On the one hand, there are properties that are universal to beings, including man, and on the other hand, those proper to man solely as a person. Thus, the paradox manifests itself as an expression of the tension, or, to use Cargile’s nomenclature, conflict between that which a person has in common with other beings and that which opposes this having-in-common. Properties attributed solely to a person are not only opposite to the properties attributed to man and other beings, but also transcend them, because they are more perfect. So if common characteristics are to be called natural, however this term is understood, then at the opposite pole there are properties that somehow

²⁶ G. Hołub, *Osoba ludzka: pomiędzy paradoksem a wieloaspektowością istnienia*, op. cit., p. 202.

exceed them, supernatural ones. Of course, the concept of supernatural may be understood in various ways, depending on how we understand “nature.” Whether the “supernatural” is taken in more classical terms, as something spiritual, or in more naturalistic ones, as the emergent, mental aspect of the human psyche, the paradoxes of person point at the same time to something additional compared to other beings, and thus to some kind of man’s transcendence with respect to them, as well as to his belonging to the order of nature (immanence), and thus his structural self-transcendence. Such an interpretation of paradoxes, although it rightly emphasizes the person’s transcendence and self-transcendence, leads to some interpretive difficulties. Since the opposition of characteristics constituting the paradox occurs within man himself, the problem immediately arises of dividing man into what is personal (transcendent) and non-personal (immanent). In such case, however, man as a whole would not be a person, but only something in him would be personal. An alternative solution would be to accept that it is not an arrangement of rigidly construed properties (reason, freedom, love) that manifests personal existence, but precisely the dynamism of paradoxes in which the tension between the various properties is expressed, and even more so between the different aspects of his being.

The common denominator of all of the paradoxes of personhood is that they can be seen as an expression of the way of being.²⁷ If one pole of a person’s existence is being oneself, then the other is one’s becoming. If the existence of a person is non-transmittable and therefore non-communicable, then at the same time a person is able to communicate to an extent that is not available to other beings. If a person is part of a community, he also exists as an existential whole and a fullness. Possibly the most difficult aspect of personhood is cognitive overttness and covertness, but also these properties may be read in the existential key. Paradoxes are independent of each other, and each carries some knowledge about the existence of a person. That is why nothing manifests personal existence as effectively as paradoxes. This existence is so

²⁷ This is how they are interpreted by personalists.

stretched between the opposite poles (being – becoming, communicability – non-communicability, part – whole, overtness – covertness) that it stops only at the threshold of absurdity, an inner contradiction, thus appearing precisely as a paradox. At the same time, it extends between that which is immanent and that which is transcendent in a person, manifesting the person's self-transcendence. Moreover, each individual paradox refers to a different aspect of that existence. Due to paradoxes affirming the extreme opposites in the properties of personal existence, between which this existence is stretched, it cannot be described as a conglomerate of individual characteristics. This means that personal existence is a paradoxical existence, but it is not an arrangement of opposite properties expressed in paradoxes, or an arrangement of the particular paradoxes through which it is manifested.

Conclusions

The problem of the paradoxes of personhood is rarely addressed by philosophers. However, it is essential for understanding the specificity of man's existence as a personal being. Theological disputes in Christian antiquity led to supplementing the traditional categories of substance, nature, and essence with the concept of person. As this concept was applied to man, those properties which go beyond his biological conditioning were emphasized. As a result, it was possible to see the tension between those human characteristics which are common to man as well as other material beings, and those properties which distinguish him from those beings, which was ultimately expressed in the paradoxes of personhood. These paradoxes are not antinomies or paralogsms in the logical sense, however. They cannot be explained away by flaws in human thinking or cognition. They are an expression of the opposite properties of personhood which represent aporias – objective difficulties. As such, they arise from the way a person exists. Unlike other paradoxes of the kind, e.g. the paradox of identity and change, they cannot be interpreted as compounds of being. Therefore, the problem of their cause remains open, calling for an interpretation on the basis of some

ontological system. Interpretations proposed so far refer to Aristotelian and Thomist metaphysics, seeing in them the effect of the person's spiritual-corporeal composition. Irrespective of systemic explanations, the properties affirmed in paradoxes can be seen as particular manifestations of personal existence. This existence is not an arrangement of the particular properties or paradoxes in which it is revealed. It manifests itself as extending between extreme (almost contradictory) poles, and at the same time as multifaceted, diverse, never limited only to that which can be known through the paradoxes.

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Abstract

The Paradoxes of Person – Some Remarks

The goal of the article is to present and analyze the paradoxes of person in the historical, logical-epistemological, and systematic aspect. Their historical source should be sought already in the beginnings of philosophical reflection on the issue of personhood. The interpretation of this concept has been influenced by the Christian religion which contributed to highlighting the opposition between properties common to man and other beings, and those which distinguish him from those beings. It was finally reflected in the paradoxes of person which are construed today as the opposition between existence (being a person) and becoming; (ontic) non-communicability and (intentional) communicability; overtness (knowability) and covertness (essential unknowability); being a whole and being a part. These paradoxes, however, are not antinomies or paralogisms in the logical sense. They cannot be explained away by flaws in human thinking or cognition. They are an expression of the opposite properties of personhood which represent aporias – objective difficulties. As such, they arise from the way a person exists. The paradoxes of person are superimposed, so to say, onto the paradoxes of being, e.g. that of identity and change. They cannot be interpreted as compounds of being. Therefore, they are most often treated as a result of the complex, spiritual-corporeal structure of man. Another problem, just as important as the cause of paradoxes, is the question of their significance. For they may be interpreted as a manifestation of a way of personal being

that extends between extreme (almost contradictory) poles; multifaceted, diverse, never limited only to the arrangement of particular properties which form the paradoxes, or to that which can be known through them.