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Anthropology of the evangelical counsels in the school of St. Benedict of Nursia

“Having our loins girded [...] with faith
and the performance of good works,
let us walk in His paths by the guidance of the Gospel,
that we may deserve to see Him
who has called us to His kingdom”¹

Abstract

Man is someone real and as such he is immersed in a world that is a *task* set to him as a person. Therefore, the whole world, as entirely coming from God, and entirely assigned to Him, is constantly *bursting* with its natural truth and good and, consequently, also beauty. This is an important perspective, both in the order of nature and in the order of grace, also because the synthesis and fulfilment of all values (perfections), which is personal fullness – holiness, is the ultimate reference of the human person to the Person of God. However, this perspective becomes comprehensible only in the field of the realism of the human person’s truth, goodness and beauty, related to their perfect Source, and therefore to the Truth, Goodness and Beauty of the Person of God Himself.

In this sense, it can be said that God is the *End* of all perfections. Holiness itself is thus a specific *peak* of the elevation of human potentialities to a *higher level* of being. „Holiness, through the elevation of truth, goodness and beauty to the supernatural level, can fulfil the potential of human nature – reason and will, to their limits; and this fulfilment, in Christian thought, can only take place in *visio beatifica*, to which this life here and

¹ *St. Benedict’s Rule for Monasteries*, transl. by L.J. Doyle, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1948 (hereafter referred to as: “Rule” + page number).

now is supposed to prepare us”² Let us add that the understanding and implementation of evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience, serve this growth in a particular way. The counsels are the evangelical factor *stimulating* and strengthening the work of the intellect and free will.

Keywords

St. Benedict, person, freedom, consecration, chastity, poverty, obedience, holiness.

1. Introduction

Let us begin this reflection with the remark that every man, regardless of the culture he lives in, aptitudes possessed and personal aspirations which he will never cease to follow, is a being who, in his deepest nature, is religious, that is, naturally open to God, and at the same time endowed with the intellect and free will. This truth, especially in recent decades, is sometimes put into question, or even visibly contested. This is also happening in the broadly understood philosophical anthropology. Nevertheless, this truth is the inalienable and necessary content of the very fact of being human. Rationality, the cognitive power of the intellect, and freedom, the operation of free will, together with the affective sphere, as well as religiousness, i.e. a person-to-person relationship with God, are absolutely irreplaceable. Through them the essence of being human, or being a person, becomes manifest. Having, therefore, free will and intellect, and, consequently, being guided by them and living a life of religious faith, is something most natural, and, therefore, also something necessary. In other words, they are not something *added*, but they represent the very *core* of being human.

It is worth adding here that the criterion for the adequacy of the philosophical image of man is not a chronological one, according to which – the more contemporary (currently: postmodern) the perception of the image is, the more complete it is, but the criterion that allows us to reach the full truth about man. We are, therefore, allowed to say that it is the integral human image that constitutes the measure for this adequacy, that is, the image that takes into account all the aspects of human nature, but also its supernatural horizon. An irreplaceable example of such an approach is the testimony of the life and

² M.A. Krąpiec, *Dziela*, vol. XV: *U podstaw rozumienia kultury*, Lublin 1991: RW KUL, pp. 258–259.

thought of St. Benedict of Nursia³, whose venerable *Rule* and its precepts continue to harmonise nature and grace in an extremely prudent way. Although many years have passed since the *Rule*'s completion, the phenomenon of the richness of its content consists in the fact that it is still evangelically unambiguous, that is, it is simple and realistic. And along with this simplicity and realism it is also exceptionally demanding, and at the same time exceptionally *humane* (gentle).⁴ It seems, then, that contemporary culture, contemporary anthropology and Christian spirituality need such a vision of man – clear, unambiguous and realistic – to be recalled and popularised.⁵

2. Towards the understanding of person: the anthropological level

Christian anthropological thought, meaning a thought that draws its inspiration from both the content of the Gospel and the analysis of human nature, especially the classical thought: among others, the heritage of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, understands man as a being in many respects absolutely distinguished. Man is understood here as a bodily-spiritual being⁶ and, simultaneously, as a being that transcends all the surrounding nature. Therefore, transcendence and personal auto-transcendence are the constitutive components of human essence. That is the reason why the question of the existence and operation of the two fundamental powers of the human soul, which are the intellect and will, emerges at the forefront of this anthropological optics. The intellectual life, centred on the acts of cognition, as well as volitional actions,

³ See: T.M. Dąbek, *Święty Benedykt z Nursji*, Kraków 2011: WAM.

⁴ See: *Rule*, pp. 3-6.

⁵ In this analysis, focusing on the anthropology of the spirituality of St. Benedict, we will use the concept of man developed by one of the most outstanding representatives of the contemporary metaphysics of person and philosophical anthropology, a co-founder (alongside Cardinal Karol Wojtyła) of the Lublin School of Classical Philosophy, M.A. Krąpiec OP. His understanding of man is in many aspects consistent with the image of person outlined by the Patron Saint of Europe, especially regarding the anthropological and metaphysical realism and Christian maximalism. Both concepts describe and interpret man in an integral way, that is, on the natural as well as supernatural levels.

⁶ Speaking about the soul and body, St. Benedict uses the metaphor of the „ladder”. The soul and the body are like „side poles” that are connected with „the steps of humility” and „monastic discipline”. Cf. *Rule*, p. 22.

the pivot of which is the act of human free decision, constitute the principal expression of the aforementioned aspects of transcendence. It is also here that a wide range of reflections find its source; reflections related to human dignity and the total irreducibility of human being to any other manifestation of the existence and functioning of the elements of the God-created reality.

Let us add that, against this background, human personality and its realisation in the multifaceted manifestations of the aforementioned transcendence also acquire special meaning. The distinguished existence of man, his ontic status, finds both its source and complementation in the spiritual intellectual acts, that is, cognitive actions and decision-making acts, the functionality of which comes from this typically personal base, which is free will. It follows, therefore, that man, as a personal being, transcends the surrounding nature through various components of his cognitive apparatus: concept-formation, judgment, reasoning, etc., which thereby reveal the foundation of the manifestations of his auto-transcendence. On the other hand, the transcendence to which we have referred before is lived in the area of free decision-making acts which, by their very nature, shape the inner face of his being. Every act of will is an important manifestation of spiritual personality-building. Freedom is the specific field of *humanity-shaping*, from which there is no *escape*.⁷ It can even be said that man is, in some way, *condemned* to freedom.

The indicated crucial areas of human personality realisation find their complement and specific exemplification in these (specifically) spiritual acts that are revealed in human creative activity: work and religious experiences. From this consideration, the conclusion that emerges is that man, as the creator of culture, through the (intentional) products of culture shapes his personal interior. His top achievement, the only one of its kind, is religious acts as an absolutely distinguished space for the boldest *flights* of human intellect and will (including the emotional sphere).

In this context, the natural desire for happiness also appears, which, in turn, is the pursuit of this personality fullness, which is holiness.⁸ Thus, it becomes visible that the integral concept of man as a person, mainly the realistic concept which has developed on the basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, provides

⁷ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Dziela*, vol. IX: *Ja – człowiek*, Lublin 1991: RW KUL, p. 261.

⁸ St. Benedict, encouraging personal holiness, in his catalogue of tools that leads to good works, warns against the incomplete or false understanding of it: „Not to wish, he says, to be called holy before one is holy; but first to be holy, that one may be truly so called”. *Rule*, p. 17.

adequate *tools* to grasp, describe and understand the essence of man and his fundamental personal actions, including the actions focused on personality improvement by experiencing a life guided by the evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience.

3. To the fullness of the person – the light of the Gospel

Anthropological reflection leads to the conclusion that there are many important reasons why man-person is who he is, that is, a being completely distinguished from the entire surrounding world. But let us notice now that the specific synthesis of all components of humanity, according to its integral interpretation, is love which is the most perfect and the fullest personal act; the love expressed in human relationship with God, other people, and also in human internal acts. It should be taken into account that the human person is a psychosomatic being and that, in its internal *structure*, it is the acts of reason (cognitive) and freedom (decision-making) that occupy the superior place; but all of them constantly refer to the perspective of their fullness, that is to such a direction, in which (specifically personal) inclinations are oriented, that culminates in *pure* acts emerging from spiritual aspirations, based on a personal relationship with God, the fullness of all perfections. And this is the reason why St. Benedict, constantly taking into account both the spiritual and corporal aspects of human life, reminds his readers that it is man's duty „to do battle”, in which obedience to God's commandments is the basic support. Obedience „without delay” is – he emphasises – „the highest degree of humility” and in itself is a „boon”.⁹

Let us once again add that man remains himself (i.e. a person) and becomes more and more himself through his cognitive activities. By nature, he seeks to get to know – to know himself, other people, the world around him, all its most complicated aspects and the deepest secrets. One can also say that whatever man gets to know, that is, with his intellect in some way *embraces*, assimilates, and thus makes his own, he, at the same time naturally, loves, i.e. constantly chooses to „run [...] by good deeds”.¹⁰ Therefore, human reflection, *remaining in contact* with reality, is *friendly* towards it. Thus, the cognisable world becomes *readable*, aspectual – but still – comprehensible. It is, in its own way,

⁹ See: *Rule*, pp. 5. 18. 98.

¹⁰ *Rule*, p. 3.

close to thoughts. Therefore, one can and should be talking about the natural love of the entire universe.

Proportionally to the cognitive order, related to the functioning of the intellect, there is also a personal space, closely connected with the cognitive order, which is acts of free will. By the existence of such a space, the truth revealed is that man has a natural ability to recognise the good, is characterised by the aptitude to contemplate it, and is capable of choosing it. In a word, a person makes free choices, makes decisions. It is in this sense, that it is said that free will is indispensable, because such an act of relinquishment would also be – however it may seem paradoxical – an already made choice-decision. This, therefore, reveals the order of the love of good (goods), which man follows. Being rational and free, he deals with good. The latter, as recognised and, secondarily, wanted, leads him out of passivity and directs him to achieve itself. A spiritually mature person recognises the apparent good, or obvious falsity, which happen to appear somewhere along the way, and in the spirit of faith „dashes” them „against Christ” as a rock¹¹, reminds us the holy Monk from Nursia.

Ultimately, however, it is the love of good that constitutes the end of the process of both cognition and assimilation of it. In this sense it is said that good (good as such) stimulates to action, which means that the cognised (because it is *readable* and wanted, because it is *loved*) being is at the same time an object of love. This shows that the natural order of both inanimate and animated beings arouses an inclination, a specific *attraction*, in man. This is because, without the context provided by the world, the world of things and people, especially and above all, people, he would not have a platform to manifest the entire potential of his spiritual powers. Thus, man-person, a rational and free being, is and becomes himself only when nourished by the love of truth, of good and beauty; two dimensions being revealed here – the vertical and horizontal one. Both of these dimensions are necessary because the internally mature person is aware of the fact that the good which he owns ultimately comes from God.¹²

In this context, one should pay attention to the interpersonal (community) perspective of the phenomenon of human love. Here, the fundamental *aspect* of being human is revealed, where the truth that love is the most perfect human act is being made known.¹³ Love is, above all, an act of a person – the „begin-

¹¹ *Rule*, p. 3.

¹² Cf. *Rule*, pp. 4. 16.

¹³ Cf. *Rule*, p. 29.

ning” and „end” of being a person. It makes all specifically human actions, both intellectual and volitional, complete. Love is their source-motive, synthesis and fullness, the most perfect form of expression. Consequently, it means that love is the most authentic human *way* of fulfilment as man-person (this also applies to the implementation of the evangelical counsels).

The perspective of man’s realisation indicated here leads to an important, as it seems, conclusion, namely that man, especially from a strictly personalistic point of view, is-exists and is-acts, that is, he fulfils himself *in* love and *for* love. Man is a person (in relation to) himself and is also one, *and even more so*, among (in relation to) other human persons – the intelligent and free creatures, open to love, capable of love, able to accept it and endowed with it. The basic relationship that is revealed here is the relationship of „I” to „you” – the „you” of other people and the „You” of God. In the direct, personal relationship with God, man consciously answers – „I am he”.¹⁴ It is a relationship of mutual self-giving as a person. Man gets to know the world, the same man recognises another human being as a person, that is someone who performs cognitive acts, someone who makes choices and, ultimately, someone who loves. Man makes decisions: in the face of the world he shapes, but also in the face of another person by choosing whom he acknowledges another person who is human („who”), not a thing („what”). Another person is the only partner worthy of the human „I”. Besides, this „I” also recognises itself as a person who is a gift.

It should be observed here that the above-mentioned „I”-“you” relation constitutes an inalienable ground for all interpersonal references, which, at the same time, are references that constitute the human’s own self as a person, as well as the bond underlying communication between people (community). The relationship of this type shapes the humanity of every human being at an absolutely basic level. Obviously, every human being is a person and perfects himself as a person, but he does it all living among other people who are characterised by their personal aspirations, desires and the goals they constantly set. St. Benedict believes this type of reflection is extremely important because the mature, evangelical community life is helpful to all people in their pursuit of holiness, but in a special way to the „strongest kind of monks”, that is the „Cenobites”.¹⁵

The reflections focusing on the issue of both the essence of love and the role love plays in both individual and community lives also allow us to make

¹⁴ *Rule*, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Rule*, p. 7.

some remarks concerning the strictly theological aspect of experiencing love in interpersonal relations, namely the relationship with the mystery of religious consecration. Let us notice first that such a consecration is a gift that a person makes of his or her life. The consecration itself is a gift, a grace that results from God's work in man. The consecration of a person to God is also a human gift, that is, a free action of man who, recognising God's will, offers himself to Himself; in a sense man gives himself over to God's exclusive *possession*.¹⁶ This means that the consecrated person disposes of his or her life in such a way that it becomes open to all the requirements arising from this content of the act of consecration, which is the evangelical counsels.

Naturally, consecration understood in this way, being a personal gift, a gift received from God who loves man, is also a (rational and free) gift for other people. In this sense, one can say that a consecrated person is a gift, but, also, whatever a consecrated person does following the evangelical counsels, is and becomes gift. The gift is more evangelical and authentic when it is justified and motivated by love. Such a consecration (*out of love* and *for love*) is a gift-sacrifice, *burning* for God and for man.

There is an obvious pattern here: the more authentic, that is, the more sincere and fully altruistic love is as the motive and end of all human activities, the more clear and true the sacrifice is, which man offers to God in the service of others. For this reason, it is said that love is a *measure* of the authenticity of consecration and the evangelical counsels resulting from it; and this is because all the practical manifestations of the consecrated life find their source and confirmation in love itself.

These remarks lead to the conclusion that such an understanding of consecration, both of an individual person and of a community of persons (St. Benedict calls the community a „workshop” in which virtues are acquired¹⁷), includes a non-accidental relationship – man consecrates himself to God, and God, in turn, is the one who consecrates. Thus, there is a strong relationship, based on God's grace, between man, consecrating himself out of love, and God, the Consecrator, who is Love. This relationship is a necessary one – necessary for man, in particular, who lives *out of love* (Love) and *for love*. Therefore, conse-

¹⁶ In St. Benedict's admonitions, particular attention is paid to consistency and spiritual perseverance: „Having given us these assurances – he reminds his readers – the Lord is waiting every day for us to respond by our deeds to His holy admonitions”. *Rule*, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Rule*, p. 18.

cration is a rational and free act of a person, i.e. of someone who is loved and who loves, that is, who can accept love. It is an act that flows out of love and leads to it. The evangelical perspective also convinces us of the fact that there is a fundamental dimension of understanding and experiencing consecration, which is the *logic of the cross*; the logic which is the *heart* of consecration and the justification of love itself. The expiatory aspect of consecration is in the *Rule* of St. Benedict constantly present.¹⁸

4. Man in the horizon of the evangelical counsels

At the beginning of this part of the reflection, it is worth to recall once again that man is by nature a cognising being. And whatever man cognises is always cognised as being, i.e. as something that exists. Of course, this cognition is not complete and, as such, it gives birth to the natural nostalgia of the human person for a cognition which is full. It is a completely natural striving for the intellectual vision of the fullness of being, the fullness which in the ultimate perspective is God himself. It also means that man recognises and affirms himself in the horizon of God who is a Person – the personal Truth.¹⁹ This truth teaches him prudence and makes him – as St. Benedict emphasises – „fearing the Lord”.²⁰

This leads to the conclusion that only God can cognise the whole richness of the world, the *full content* of everything that exists – people, things, events, processes, etc. Only the Creator's Intellect is able, and always in perfect degree, to penetrate cognitively the entire universe and all things, and do it holistically, that is, taking in consideration all their aspects. And if so, then one can recognise the specific *presence* of the intellect in each being. It is always a creative presence. It should be also noted that the entire cognitive order of the world, that is the one oriented towards the truth (intelligible), is the most fundamental relation. And only in the light of this relation, all other perfections – of things, and above all the perfection of persons – become comprehensible, or possible

¹⁸ „Thus, never departing from His school – he encourages his readers in the last precept in the Prologue of his Rule – but persevering in the monastery according to His teaching until death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ and deserve to have a share also in His kingdom”. *Rule*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Dzieła*, vol. II: *Realizm ludzkiego poznania*, Lublin 1995: RW KUL, p. 573.

²⁰ *Rule*, p. 4.

at all.²¹ It follows that the nature created by God is itself endowed with this basic value, which is the *purity of existence*. For the action of God, which equals his cognition, calls to existence – creates, and in this act of creation continually supports all beings.

Let us add here that the entire universe communicates the message that everything that exists comes from God, who is the Fullness of Existence, Intellect and Good-Love. He is Pure Love. And both the human person and all reality come from God in a free way, that is out of love. It is for this reason that the author of the *Rule* encourages his students: „Let us open our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with attentive ears the warning which the divine voice cries daily to us”.²² Consequently, it means that everything exists by virtue of participating in the (pure) existence of God, and this is due to His creative action through the Intellect, that is, according to His divine thought. Therefore, let us remind ourselves, while talking about the actions of man as a creature endowed with reason and free will, it should be noted that he has a natural ability to *read* (understand) the world around him; the world which, being the fruit of the action of Intellect and Will, is both cognisable and at the same time worthy of love.

At the same time, it is a path leading to the conclusion that man-person, albeit imperfectly, is – as the *Book of Genesis* says – „like” God’s Person and is therefore capable of love; has the ability to make important choices. This is because he can, being God’s creation and „God’s image” at the same time, cognise the world, cognise other people and finally – cognise himself. This natural proficiency in the *reading* of the truth, and thus the ability to love, makes man open to God and also to man as *imago Dei*. In a word, man is capable of loving-maintaining the purity of his own heart only in the perspective of co-operation with God’s grace. However, this always happens on the basis of a reasonable discernment, that is, a personal *reading* of the truth about oneself and the surrounding world in the context of the Truth, which is God Himself. St. Benedict, in the spirit of true realism, gives here an exceptionally accurate and always relevant indication: „and let us ask God that He be pleased to give us the help of His grace for anything which our nature finds hardly possible”.²³

²¹ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Dzieła*, vol. XXII: *O rozumienie świata*, Lublin 2002: RW KUL, pp. 111, 201.

²² *Rule*, p. 2.

²³ *Rule*, p. 5.

In the further course of these observations, let us note that everything that a person cognises, although he cognises in an imperfect way (always only *at a certain angle*), he always cognises as something that really exists. Indeed, it applies both to things and other people. This, however, reveals the completely natural, personal desire, which is the intellectual vision of the Fullness, which is the Person of God. Another aspect is also revealed here – this time the one referring to the acts of free will. The aspiration flowing from it is the natural (innate) desire for happiness (good). „Longing for God as the fullness of Being and Good, however, is a desire ineffective for man, even though it is a real desire, for to achieve this goal is beyond human might, but it is a gift from God”.²⁴ The same regularity is noticed by St. Benedict in his *Rule*, when giving precepts concerning work to improve oneself, he constantly encourages spiritual realism.²⁵

In the light of these reflections, it should be said that the ultimate explanation for all personal decisions, as well as, secondarily, all human attitudes, is the Person of God, His truth. For as, on the purely natural basis, another person is the reason for all specifically human activities, especially the act of love, so on the basis going beyond the level of nature, the reason for such references is the Person of God himself (Persons of the Most Holy Trinity). Although the human person never ceases to experience the fragility, i.e. poverty of his own existence, he never rids himself of this spontaneous liking for the world, and especially for other people. All the time, man is amazed at the complexity, but also the beauty of the created universe. He experiences the poverty of his existence, but he also carries within himself a constant desire to pursue the good – a higher happiness, the good which is personal by nature; the good that opens him to the order of grace.

Hence the conclusion is that man is completely dependent on God, is absolutely reliant on Him. Without Him, man simply cannot live. Therefore, man himself, as well as the community of persons, discerning the will of God, conforms to „a rule” governing life.²⁶ This means that in man a natural desire to see (contemplate) God, as well as personally exist in Him, is realised. It is thus a full and final fulfilment of all his personal aspirations. This is confirmed by the natural motion of the will, which is its striving (inclination) for good. Its uppermost manifestation is the desire for personal, supreme and infinite happiness, that is, the desire to unite with God – the Trinity of Persons. Through

²⁴ M.A. Krąpiec, *Realizm ludzkiego poznania*, p. 573.

²⁵ See: *Rule*, p. 4.

²⁶ *Rule*, p. 7.

the acts of his intellect, man realises the full, ultimate sense of this desire. It also communicates the truth that on the level of acts of will, man expresses his particular (because personal) responsibility. It is a responsibility towards the world in which he lives and develops as a human being, but also towards other people; ultimately – towards God as the Creator and the Personal Host of the whole world of persons and things.²⁷

The above-mentioned reflections refer to the understanding of the entire universe – the world of things and people. Each type of existence, especially of personal existence, is a kind of *connection* with the unselfish love of God. We exist and we are who we are because God „wanted (loves) us to exist”. It makes love the „measure” of our being, that is the „measure” of our existence, and therefore „in such measure” we exist, in which God „*freely* wanted us to be, exist”.²⁸ This exposes the true and full poverty of the human being. Here, love is a natural focus on the good, especially the good of a person. Every being exists solely because Someone, the perfect Will of the Person of God, wants it to actually exist. The purpose of human life is therefore to „preserve charity (love)” and to feed on its „unspeakable sweetness”.²⁹

It can therefore be concluded that all the goodness in a being comes from the fact that the same being takes its existence from the Intellect, or First Love. This is also, and above all, true for the unique, specific end, which is love.³⁰ It is love which, being itself an openness to God’s gifts, „expands” human heart.³¹ It follows that the natural love is identified with the nature of every being, and therefore – of everything that exists and, as such, works. Therefore love, the natural motion towards good, is the *link* that connects and gives meaning to everything that exists. As a result, „God’s love is the first natural aspiration of all nature.” Naturally, in „man it manifests itself in the form of a desire for happiness, which fully exists only in the First and Supreme Good”.³² Thus, the

²⁷ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Dzieła*, vol. XVIII: *Ludzka wolność i jej granice*, Lublin 2000: RW KUL, pp. 36, 201-202.

²⁸ M.A. Krąpiec, *Dzieła*, vol. VII: *Metafizyka. Zarys teorii bytu*, Lublin 1995: RW KUL, p. 147.

²⁹ *Rule*, pp. 5-6.

³⁰ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Dzieła*, vol. XVI: *O rozumienie filozofii*, Lublin 1991: RW KUL, pp. 144-145.

³¹ Cf. *Rule*, p. 5.

³² M.A. Krąpiec, *Realizm ludzkiego poznania*, p. 185.

above-mentioned poverty of spirit, of the reason and will in every man, finds its personal wealth and complement in God.

The personal immersion into the world *raises* man as a cognising being and one able to make free choices and makes him able to cognise and desire the Fullness of all perfections, that is God. At the same time, the Beauty of the Fullness of Being, that is Pure Existence, is being desired here. The fullness of God's nature is simple, but this Divine simplicity should not be interpreted as a kind of existential *poverty*. On the contrary, it is the Fullness of all perfections. While speaking of God as a Fullness, the Fullness of Existence should be considered first, which in its essence is a revelation of His love for everything that comes from Him. This liking here is a manifestation – let us not forget – of a fully natural desire for happiness. The desire is just love and personal longing for God, even though the full realisation of this desire, *by human intentions alone*, is unattainable.³³ This means that, despite his rationality and freedom, man himself, i.e. only on the basis of his nature alone, is not fully obedient to God. The work of God's grace is necessary here to constantly purge the motivation of man's actions, the sincerity of his intentions. Hence follows the first of the observations made by the Saint of Nursia in his Rule: „Listen, my son, to your master's precepts, and incline the ear of your heart”³⁴

The remarks made above authorise us to state that the personal life of man manifests itself as a distinguished form of existence, which is always *being for*. This *for* reveals itself before another (human) person, but also, in the final horizon, before the Person of God. He is a perfect Person. He is the Fullness of all perfections, the source of „true and everlasting life”.³⁵ Therefore, this unique personal act, which is love, should be observed here. The source of love is a direct personal bond, which is a specific *radiation* of the obedience of reason and will; obedience, which is – as our Saint says – „strong, bright weapons”.³⁶ This becomes the basis of the beatific vision that reveals itself to man at the end of his life. It is a vision of personal cognition in eternity. It is the final and at the same time utterly perfect form of cognition, of the experience of God as Beauty.³⁷

³³ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Dzieła*, vol. XX: *Psychologia racjonalna*, Lublin 1996: RW KUL, p. 237.

³⁴ *Rule*, p. 1; cf. *Rule*, pp. 13. 20.

³⁵ *Rule*, p. 2.

³⁶ *Rule*, p. 1.

³⁷ Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *O rozumienie świata*, pp. 141-142.

The whole range of the above findings show that in the light of God's action the whole richness of human being is revealed, which constitutes itself according to the model („likeness”) which is God himself. Therefore, the conclusion appears here that man is not a being *thrown into* the world of things that is unfriendly to him. He is a person, that is someone who bears in himself an incomparable wealth of personal development opportunities – those of cognitive nature, which is *reading* the world that is both given and set as a task to him, as well as those of volitional nature. In this way he is shaping his personal interior, i.e. becoming more and more obedient to his both natural and supernatural vocation. Man exists and develops as a person by *forming personal bonds* with the real (true) good, real truth, as well as their synthesis, which is beauty. The development becomes effective, however, under the condition that the „labour of obedience” is done,³⁸ because through it the true dignity is restored in man.

This means that man is someone real and, as such, he is immersed in a world that is a *task* set to him as a person. Therefore, the whole world, as entirely coming from God, and entirely assigned to Him, is constantly *bursting* with its natural truth and good and, consequently, also beauty. This is an important perspective, both in the order of nature and in the order of grace, also because the synthesis and fulfilment of all values (perfections), which is personal fullness – holiness, is the ultimate reference of the human person to the Person of God. However, this perspective becomes comprehensible only in the field of the realism of the human person's truth, goodness and beauty, related to their perfect Source, and therefore to the Truth, Goodness and Beauty of the Person of God Himself.

In this sense, it can be said that God is the *End* of all perfections. Holiness itself is thus a specific *peak* of the elevation of human potentialities to a *higher level* of being. „Holiness, through the elevation of truth, goodness and beauty to the supernatural level, can fulfil the potential of human nature – reason and will, to their limits; and this fulfilment, in Christian thought, can only take place in *visio beatifica*, to which this life here and now is supposed to prepare us”. Let us add that the understanding and implementation of evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience, serve this growth in a particular way. The counsels are the evangelical factor *stimulating* and strengthening the work of the intellect and free will.

³⁸ *Rule*, p. 1.

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