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To Be, for a Human Being, is to Govern.

The Personalistic Foundations of Authority

According to Tadeusz Styczeń

### Introduction

The statement contained in the title – I believe – expresses the essence of the human state in the most-concise way, as is perceived and presented in his anthropological and ethical deliberations by Tadeusz Styczeń (1931-2010)<sup>1</sup>. This thinker and ethicist from Lublin was convinced that the fullness essential to a human being as a person is the fullness of freedom. It is not, however, freedom “without address” or “without reason”, freedom into darkness and emptiness, but it is freedom understood as “the service of the king”<sup>2</sup>. It is born of self-dependence, of the personal entity’s governing and directing himself or herself, i.e. of self-government and self-direction. For this reason, we should constantly ask what determines the human identity, what constitutes his or her goodness, and what helps him or her to achieve the fullness proper to a person. T. Styczeń summarizes his teaching about the human being, when he writes “To be for a human is to rule. But to rule for a human being is to surrender to the truth about one's dignity, is to mature in love”<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Philosopher, ethicist, adherent, and successor of Karol Wojtyła in the Department of Ethics of the Catholic University in Lublin, the leading representative of the Polish school of ethical personalism. In his academic research he focused mainly on the issue of the mutual relationships and interpenetration of ethics and anthropology. In opposition to extreme liberal interpretations of personalism, he developed a theory of the human being as a free entity guided by truth in his or her actions. Based on these analyses, he took up a number of issues in the field of social ethics and the ethical foundations of politics, i.e. the problem of the rule of law of the State, and its legislative activity.

<sup>2</sup> T. Styczeń, *Antropologiczne podsatwy etyki czy etyczne podstawy antropologii*, in *Dziela zebrane*, vol. 3, *Objawiać osobę*, ed by Alfred Marek Wierzbicki, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2013, 168-169.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, *Miłość spełnieniem wolności. Konieczność dyscypliny życiowej w kontekście nauczania Jana Pawła II*, in *Dziela zebrane*, vol 3, *Objawiać osobę*, 273.

The problem of the relationship between human freedom and authority is one of the fundamental questions with which the human wrestles, on both the theoretical and practical levels. In order to fully understand oneself, one needs to know the answer to the questions “To whom am I subordinated? To what extent, and why?”. This article is an attempt to state and to analyze the assumptions of ethical personalism, which in the light of the principles worked out by T. Styczeń are helpful in revealing the contact point of the relationship between the person and his or her freedom and the question of power. The thesis of this article is that the basic condition for exercising social authority (i.e. public, State and political authority) is to retain authority over oneself, to be a free, truth-driven, self-governing entity. It should be added, however, that of the three types of authority included in the scope of social power, this article places a certain emphasis on political authority in a democratic society.

### 1. The starting point: *Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*

The foundation of personalism as developed by T. Styczeń is moral experience, consisting of the direct recognition by the subject of the absolute duty to affirm the person and his or her dignity. Moral duty is understood here as a normative interpersonal relation, in which “the person-object stands... before the person-subject as someone who, by the very fact of being a person, demands recognition for him or herself from all persons, regardless of any other aims”<sup>4</sup>. Its expression is the norm: *Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam* – “A human person should be affirmed for his or her own sake”<sup>5</sup>. The basis for the formulation of this main ethical norm is the recognition of the importance of the goodness of the person in the context of what can be experienced cognitively in the visible world.

In the ontological perspective, the dimension of being a person is the first and fundamental dimension of being human. It constitutes an inalienable and unchangeable value. In cognitive confrontations a human being always appears as “someone”, who, in the way of his or her most-perfect and unique existence, differs from the rest of the beings in the visible world, and a one-of-a-kind existence, differs from the rest of the beings of the visible world. This peculiarly “separate” dimension of the existence of every human without exception

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<sup>4</sup> Idem, *Uwagi o istocie moralności*, in *Wprowadzenie do etyki*, ed by Maria Filipiak, Andrzej Szostek, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1993, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, *Prawda o człowieku miarą jego afirmacji. O gwarancjach zabezpieczających humanizm przed wyrodzeniem się w antyhumanizm*, in *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 3, *Objawiać osobę*, 252.

makes him or her transcend everything which is contained in the notion of the “individual of a species”. A human being not just one of many exemplars of the same species, but a person. According to T. Styczeń, this is why the essence of a personal being is beyond the limit of what is accessible to thought and expressible with language, thus constituting a boundary for all attempts of defining him or her<sup>6</sup>. These are by no means devoid of value. Each of them utters some capital truth about the person. Each is an expression of the admiration and respect which are due to the person and which flow from an analysis of his or her reality and degree of perfection<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, Boethius defines the person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia* (“an individual substance of a rational nature”). According to the definition by Richard of Saint Victor, a person is *rationalis naturae individual existentia* (an “individual existence of a rational nature”)<sup>8</sup>. St. Thomas Aquinas saw in the person *individuum subsistens in rationali natura* (“an individual existing in a rational nature”) and *significat id quo est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura* (“that which is most perfect in nature”)<sup>9</sup>. The common essence of these definitions is that in each case they treat a person as the supreme form of a being. However, according to Styczeń, each of these attempts at “discovering” a given person somehow equates him or her to all the others, depriving them of their “separateness”. A person is like a one-and-only copy of a book which cannot be duplicated – a specific manuscript. We discover a person not only when we see that he or she is not comparable to anything else in this world, but at the same time, “when we observe that each of them is in its own way also not comparable to any other, that it is different, that it is just... separate”<sup>10</sup>.

T. Styczeń was aware of the importance and significance of personalistic issues, and also of the numerous threats to which humans are exposed in the contemporary world. The discoverer of so many secrets of nature, whose possibilities of controlling matter have grown to unbelievable dimensions, is threatened not only with the sense of feeling lost, confused, but

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<sup>6</sup> Idem, *Objawiać osobę*, in *Dzieła zebrane*, vol 3, *Objawiać osobę*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> V. Possenti, *Osoba nową zasadą*, trans. Jarosław Merecki, Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2017, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Aquinas I. q.29, a.3

<sup>10</sup> T. Styczeń, *Objawiać osobę*, 22.

even with self-destruction. Like Karol Wojtyła, whose thoughts he creatively developed, the thinker from Lublin, convinced that human beings cannot lose their proper place in the world which they themselves have shaped, claimed that the task of an ethicist at all times was first and foremost to reveal the person. In order to fulfill this task, the ethicist must constantly touch the reality of the person in the most-appropriate place - at the point indicated by human experience, i.e. by an insight into the human being<sup>11</sup>.

But which way of touching and discovering this place is the most suitable, the most appropriate, and the most effective? K. Wojtyła proposes a way of looking at the person through a metaphysical analysis of an act, in which a person reveals himself or herself as its subject.

In search of an answer to the question posed above, T. Styczeń focused on the examination of the contact and interpenetration between ethics and anthropology. As he repeatedly said, *Primum ethicum et primum anthropologicum convertuntur*. This thesis is experientially obvious to him. It is the result of interpreting and understanding the ethically significant value of Socrates' postulate "Know thyself". The anthropological basis of the main ethical principle *Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*, as well as the necessary condition for the formulation of detailed moral norms, is a closer understanding and a more-detailed definition of who a human being is<sup>12</sup>. Being aware that there are many ways of revealing and explaining the problem of the human being, T. Styczeń looks at a person through moral experience, the source manifestation of which is conscience. He argues that conscience, giving us an insight into the interior of the subject, "allows us to see, as it were, the personal substance of the human being from the inside, introduces us to the interior of the human suppositum ... as in my judgment *I should* is an act of revelation and proclamation of the self-dependence of the human personal subject"<sup>13</sup>.

The primary experience of "differently" and "higher" in the human "self" is directly connected with the interior of the human being – with his or her subjective structure. T. Styczeń writes "The human, differently from everything else in this world, is at the same time his or her higher than everything else in this world. The experience of this higher goes

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<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Być sobą to przekraczać siebie – O antropologii Karola Wojtyły*, in „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, ed by Tadeusz Styczeń et al., Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1994, 496.

<sup>12</sup> Idem, *Antropologiczne podstawy etyki czy etyczne podstawy antropologii*, 165.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 168.

always – and only – hand in hand with the experience of the other. And it is based on it. Indeed, the very discovery and assertion of the human other reveals his or her higher to such an extent that it becomes a call for the recognition of the rank to which the human being is entitled. This rank demands the affirmation of the human being for his or her own sake”<sup>14</sup>. The act of this affirmation is called love. At the basis of this act always lies the affirmation of the person as a person – both the person who is myself and the person of everyone else. “Thus, discovering in myself the truth about my different *I* – writes T. Styczeń – I discover it simply as a truth concerning every *I*, that is, as a universally valid truth”<sup>15</sup>. It is at the same time a universally important norm of affirming every human *I* for himself or herself. K.Wojtyła called this norm a personalistic norm. From the positive point of view, it states “the person has such goodness that the proper and full reference to him or her is only love”<sup>16</sup>.

The moral duty of affirming the person for him or herself begins with the understanding of the ontic and axiological rank of the person among other cognitively accessible entities. When explaining what this “rank of the person” consists of, Andrzej Szostek writes “The nature of the human being distinguishes him or her from other beings, not only in a purely descriptive sense, but also in an axiological sense; because of who he or she is, the human being is more valuable than other beings on earth. This value – resulting from the fact of being a person... is referred to as personal dignity. This dignity imposes on the human being – and on the community in which he or she lives – the obligation to respect it, i.e. to live according to who the human being is”<sup>17</sup>. This position, which prescribes the affirmation of the human being, not for any other reasons or considerations, but for his or her own sake, is called personalism. According to the supporters of this position, every human being deserves special veneration by virtue of being a person<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, the fact of being a person “demands”, as it were, that the subject lives according to who he or she is. The innate, inviolable, and inalienable dignity of the human person evokes and justifies in the subject a specifically moral obligation to act in a certain way. This means that, from the moral

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<sup>14</sup> Idem, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości*, in *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 3, *Objawiać osobę*, 133.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, 134.

<sup>16</sup>The first edition of this monograph was published in Kraków in 1960. Here, I am using its 2001 edition: K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2001, 232.

<sup>17</sup> A. Szostek, *Rola pojęcia godności w etyce*, “*Studia Filozoficzne*” 1983, no 8-9, 80.

<sup>18</sup>Ibidem, 84.

point of view, the human being is obliged to respect both his or her own dignity and the dignity of others. The recognition of that dignity is expressed in a negative formula which forbids treating other persons as a means to one's own ends.

The injunction to respect personal dignity is the basic norm of personalistic ethics. In the personalistic conception of social life, it constitutes a keystone of the ethical foundations of its organization. Other principles of social life are based on this basic value of personal dignity. The dignity of the person is the objective criterion for a just State. The structure of the organization and the operation of the State are judged by whether they provide the human being, understood as an individual person, with the necessary means for his or her development.

A personalistic society emerges and develops only when the individual persons who constitute its most-basic common good develop<sup>19</sup>.

## **2. Truth and freedom as the ambit for the personalistic interpretation of the self-determination of the personal human subject**

The reason for the special status of the human subject is the dimension of transcendence proper to the human being as a personal entity. T. Styczeń, like his Master, puts great emphasis on this dimension of transcendence of the human person, which is revealed in a significant place – in the relationship between freedom and truth. In *Person and Act* [in Polish, *Osoba i czyn*], K. Wojtyła writes “Conscience reveals... the dependence of human freedom on truth. This dependence... is the basis of the person's self-dependence, that is, freedom in its essential meaning – freedom as self-determination. Along with this, it is also the basis of the transcendence of the person in an act. The transcendence of the person in an act is not only self-dependence, dependence on one's own being. It includes at the same time a moment

of dependence on truth – and this moment ultimately shapes freedom. For freedom is not achieved by subordinating truth to oneself, but by subordinating oneself to truth. Dependence on truth defines the limits of autonomy proper to the human person”<sup>20</sup>. According to this philosopher from Kraków, the function of conscience consists of determining the true good in

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<sup>19</sup> W. Wojtyła, *Osoba, społeczność, demokracja. W poszukiwaniu personalistycznych podstaw władzy społecznej*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2021, 184-185.

<sup>20</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, in „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, 198.

an act, and in constituting at the same time the moment of duty. He claims that the moment of duty discovered in conscience is the experiential form of dependence on truth to which the freedom of the person is subjected<sup>21</sup>. K. Wojtyła, by emphasizing the difference between the transcendence of the human person “through subordination to the truth”, and that vision of freedom in the name of which the subject wants to be dependent only on his or her own *I* by subordinating the truth to himself or herself, aims to distance himself or herself from those varieties of “personalism” which, by emphasizing human freedom, try to free it from the obligation to respect the truth<sup>22</sup>. K. Wojtyła considers the act of assigning freedom to truth as decisive for the ontic and moral regularity of human freedom. What is meant here is the truth about the good intentionally given, which constitutes the object of categorial choice<sup>23</sup>.

T. Styczeń, like K. Wojtyła, sees the center of the irreducible identity of every human “I” in the contact between freedom and truth, where the human being perceives and experiences the normative authority of truth. “Truth and freedom” – he writes – “are like an inner space, and at the same time wings on which the personal human subject floats and maintains at the level of his or her dignity – the personal human subject. Without this, the human being would not be what he or she is: a self-dependence in his or becoming dependent on truth”<sup>24</sup>. This is why it is the one who governs oneself is governed by truth. Who is directed by truth makes his or her own decisions independently. The will to disregard truth, in spite of the appearances of independence and freedom, is a self-surrender to the slavery of falsehood, is self-slavery through self-deception. The ethicist from Lublin refers to Thomas Aquinas, who treated the human intellect and will, which are the powers of truth and freedom, complementarily, as two sides of the same spiritual being of a human person. In the personalistic panorama, truth comes before freedom, in a way constituting its “front guard”. Everything which interferes with the subject's relation to truth, and truth itself, interferes directly or indirectly with human freedom<sup>25</sup>. T. Styczeń treated the act of betraying truth

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, 199.

<sup>22</sup> A. Szostek, *Śladami myśli świętego. Osoba ludzka pasją Jana Pawła II*, Instytut Jana Pawła II KUL, Lublin 2014, 50.

<sup>23</sup>K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, in „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, 185; A. Szostek, *Natura, rozum, wolność. Filozoficzna analiza koncepcji twórczego rozumu we współczesnej teologii moralnej*, Fundacja Jana Pawła II, Rzym, 1990, 276.

<sup>24</sup> T. Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i za drugich*, in *Dziela zebrane*, vol. 3, *Objawiać osobę*, 97.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, 87.

recognized as such by oneself as a blow to oneself, as moral suicide. Truth betrayed by the human being will remain what it is anyway: truth which will judge both the act and its perpetrator. Experiencing truth, coming to know it, the human being cannot remain neutral towards it. In a special way it refers to the truth about oneself, which he calls “the truth of self-knowledge”. He wrote “By my own act of learning the truth I bind myself to recognize it as truth. I surround myself with it. I bind myself with it! – By myself I am – bound – with it! I myself alone allow the truth to speak, and I myself recognize its voice as my own voice. I myself take on the role of its witness. Of its guarantor. I myself! Here is my autonomy! Here is my measure of independence. It is constituted by the fact that I make myself dependent on truth which does not depend on me. I transcend myself toward it. I govern and rule myself when I am governed and ruled by truth”<sup>26</sup>. In this sense, the autonomy of the person consists of his or her self-transcendence in truth<sup>27</sup>.

T. Styczeń emphasizes that the relationship which exists between fidelity to the learned truth and fidelity to oneself, by which the dignity of the human person is protected, can only be understood and justified through one's own inner experience<sup>28</sup>. To justify this thesis, he refers to the case of Socrates and the anonymous Polish Kowalski from the 1980s. In an article with the significant title *Freedom in Truth* [in Polish, *Wolność w prawdzie*], the ethicist from Lublin asks “Why did Socrates choose to remain in prison at a time when – thanks to the efforts of influential followers – the gate toward freedom stood open for him? Why did he not choose freedom outside prison?... Why did he put death above the freedom offered to him?”<sup>29</sup>. In response to this question, he argues that there is a certain paradox hidden in Socrates' decision, which reveals one of the most-essential pieces of information about the human being: he did not choose the freedom offered to him, because he chose... freedom – freedom in truth. In this way, the Sage of the Agora remained forever a symbol of the dilemma and drama of the most human of all matters. For Socrates, convinced of the legitimacy of the sentence passed against him, and at the same time wanting to remain faithful

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 89.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> A. Szostek, *Wolność-prawda-sumienie*, „Ethos”1991, no 15-16, 29.

<sup>29</sup> T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, in *Wprowadzenie do etyki*, 83.

to the truth he had discovered, the threshold of the prison cell proved to be morally impassable<sup>30</sup>.

The drama – analyzed by Styczeń – of Kowalski, imprisoned during martial law in Poland<sup>31</sup> for his “anti-State” activities, who was faced with the proposition “Sign and you will be free”, is of a similar nature. From the moment of his refusal to sign the loyalty document, an extremely interesting lesson in anthropology and ethics begins, whose teacher and student is Kowalski himself. Facing one of these extreme situations, Kowalski experiences a kind of *tremendum et fascinans misterium hominis*, in which he discovers himself, and breaks down the atom of his own *I*<sup>32</sup>. Analyzing the situation of his character, T. Styczeń writes “Kowalski penetrates deep into his own mystery, his personal subjectivity. Kowalski sees in a dazzling glimpse that he cannot ignore the truth once known and acknowledged as truth, without ignoring or eliminating his own self. To save oneself is to save a freedom incomparably deeper and more important than that offered to Kowalski by his prison superiors, in exchange for a signature which signifies an act of betrayal of the truth. To save one's freedom, to save one's fidelity to the known truth, and to save oneself, are one and the same thing”<sup>33</sup>.

The moment of learning the truth is a breakthrough and decisive in the process of a person's self-knowledge. In this respect, Kowalski's situation has a particularly valuable educational value. It specifically shows that the condition of preserving the identity of the human being as a personal subject is to be guided in his or her life by the learned truth. This also means that freedom must be subordinated to the truth<sup>34</sup>. “My freedom consists of the fact – writes T. Styczeń – that by the act of my own choice I can confirm or negate the truth which I learned, I already recognized as truth by my own act of cognition. By my own act of cognition I stated and confirmed its normative authority with regard to me. From now on,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Martial law was introduced by the communist authorities on 13 December 1981 in Poland. During this military operation, carried out by the army and the militia, a significant number of national and regional leaders of the *Solidarity* trade union advisors, members of works committees of large factories, democratic opposition activists, and intellectuals associated with *Solidarity*, were imprisoned or placed in internment centers. The experiences of one of those interned at the time, disguised as Kowalski, became the inspiration for Kwiecień's ethical considerations.

<sup>32</sup> T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, 87.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> A. Szostek, *Natura, rozum, wolność*, 283.

then, I cannot confirm myself except by confirming by an act of free choice truth already acknowledged by me through my own act of cognition... I cannot disregard, by an act of choice, truth that I came to know, even if it was apparently trivial, without causing a split in myself, reaching the depths of my own *I* <sup>35</sup>.

Thus, we come to the key issue in this part of my discussion, that of self-determination – the exercise of authority over oneself. K. Wojtyła devoted much attention to this issue in his reflections. He noted that the human being, undertaking conscious and free actions, is not only the author of his or her own acts, and their consequences, both transitive and non-transitive, but also decides about himself or herself. The Kraków philosopher emphasizes that the ability to make things happen, which in a special way reveals itself in the experience of an act, is at the same time self-determination. He wrote “Self-determination is a deeper and more-fundamental dimension of the self-agency of the human *I*, through which the human being, through an act, reveals him or herself as a personal subject”<sup>36</sup>. For the author of *Person and Act*, the structure of the self-determination of the person is the key to explaining the issue of human freedom<sup>37</sup>. It presupposes in the person a particular complexity – “the person is namely one who possesses him or herself – and at the same time one who is possessed only by him or herself”<sup>38</sup>. It reveals structural self-possession, for one can only decide on what one realistically possesses, and one who possesses can decide. At the same time, self-possession is accompanied by self-control. The person is, on the one hand, one who controls him or herself, and, on the other hand, is one whom he or she controls. In relation to oneself, he or she exercises a authority which no one else has or can have over him or her. Therefore, the person is an entity *sui iuris et alteri incommunicabilis*<sup>39</sup>.

To be self-determined is at the same time to possess and control oneself – to depend on oneself. But what does it mean, in practice, to decide about oneself? Answering this question, T. Styczeń writes “Certainly it does not mean you thrash about blindly, thrash about at will, but generally you subject the truth, including the truth about oneself, to the authority of one's own freedom. After all, as soon as I perceive the inadequacy of the reasons on which

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<sup>35</sup> T. Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, 90.

<sup>36</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota*, „Roczniki Filozoficzne” 24(1976), 2, 14.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, *Osoba i czyn*, in „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, 152.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 152-153.

I have hitherto based my conviction about something, I must and should reject this conviction at once, in order to be able to remain myself. I cannot surrender the truth to myself; I must surrender myself to the truth in order to remain myself. I remain myself and stand on my own side only when I stand on the side of truth, so when I transcend and surpass myself towards the truth, I then depend on myself... always and only when – by the most-free of choices – I make myself dependent on the truth I have come to know, including the truth about myself, which does not depend on me”<sup>40</sup>.

Considerations undertaken at this point by T. Styczeń also have a profound social sense: is it not a fundamental ethical challenge for anyone who is to exercise any kind of authority over others to maintain, above all, authority over oneself? And isn't the basic risk connected with exercising any kind of authority the loss of authority over oneself? Exercising authority over others, unlike any other sphere of human life, brings with it the danger of self-demoralization, and the developing in oneself of even anti-human traits, which is manifested in such historical figures as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin<sup>41</sup>. In the light of the analyses so far, public service appears as a special domain for affirming the truth, and thus human dignity. The last section will be the development of this thought.

### 3. From self-dependence to self-governance

Among the various possible types of power, the closest to personalism, and at the same time the most natural for it, is democratic authority. According to an eminent advocate of American personalism, Ralph Tyler Flewelling, personalism and democracy are, as it were, two poles of the reality of person and society, and their mutual relations<sup>42</sup>. There are many definitions of democracy in the philosophical literature. Discussing all of these would require a separate, extensive, study. At the basis of the considerations contained in this section lies the conviction that the foundation of democracy is the concept of the human being as a person, i.e. a rational and free being, capable of self-determination, with a mark of dignity essential only to him or her. In turn, the essence of democratic governance is the autonomy and

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<sup>40</sup> T. Styczeń, ‘*Transcendecja – drugie imię osoby*’ czyli człowiek widziany z „niskości” doświadczenia samego siebie i z „wysokości krzyża”, in *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 3, *Objawiać osobę*, 285.

<sup>41</sup> M. Rembierz, *Gra władzy i wolności. O ludzkich dążeniach do samostanowienia i podmiotowości w epoce ideologii konkurujących o zawłaszczenie człowieka*, in *Wolność i władza w życiu publicznym*, ed by Joanna Mysona Byrska and Władysław Zuziak, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT, Kraków 2008, 115 n.

<sup>42</sup> R.T. Flewelling, *Personalizm*, in *Twentieth Century Philosophy: Living Schools of Thought*, ed. DD. Runes, Philosophical Library, New York 1943, 340

participation of all citizens in making political decisions which have the interests of the whole of society at heart<sup>43</sup>. All this means that the proper sphere for the realization of the democratic form of government in modern societies is a self-governing community of individuals. Self-government has a deeply personalistic dimension. It arises directly from the ability of the person to self-determine. In a sense, the considerations presented so far have been an attempt to show the assumptions which, according to T. Styczeń, should constitute the ethical basis of a self-governing community, and thus the basis of a democratic State order.

The Polish term *samorządność* [self-governance] is close to the Greek concept of autonomy. Autonomy literally means self-determination, especially the self-determination of the law. However, we particularly speak of autonomy when we mean that a person makes all decisions on his or her own responsibility. The subject of responsibility is first and foremost an individual human being. When we say that he or she is an autonomous being, we mean first of all his or her capacity to be responsible. This presupposes that human beings can both decide for themselves and act in a certain way, and also evaluate their actions in terms of good and evil. While recognizing that the human being is an entity endowed with freedom, one must also agree that human autonomy belongs to the essence of humanity. Any attack on human autonomy is an attempt to diminish this humanity<sup>44</sup>.

It is telling that totalitarian rule, by its very nature opposed to democracy, aims to deepen the state of dependence of the individual on other individuals and institutions, and thus to weaken or even completely paralyze so-called grassroots initiatives, claiming that it “knows better”. In “knowing” better, it simultaneously strives, using various methods, to strengthen the state of dependence and moral and social incapacitation of the individual<sup>45</sup>.

According

to Władysław Stróżewski, “communities deprived of initiative are doomed not only to expect it from above, but also to demand everything from the outside. They are not even capable of formulating any project; they have to ask for everything: for ideas, for funds for their implementation, and finally for what the project is supposed to be about, because its implementation usually turns out to be something beyond their control... this way they slowly

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<sup>43</sup> V. Possenti, *Zarys filozofii polityki*, trans. Anna Fligiel, Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2012, 309.

<sup>44</sup> W. Stróżewski, *Filozoficzne podstawy samorządności*, in idem, *O wielkości. Szkice z filozofii człowieka*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2002, 237-238.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 243.

lose everything, especially the sense of their own power, and any autonomy”<sup>46</sup>. T. Styczeń, however, strongly emphasizes that even the most-sophisticated system of disinformation and violence is not able by itself to take control of the humanity and subjectivity of anyone. The enslavement it aims at would have to take the form of an act of consent by a given subject to enslaving actions, a form of self-deception and self-servitude. That is why the most-radical threat to the person comes ultimately from him or herself – from his or her free choice, which is the choice to deny the truth. “To fall into the most-radical crisis” – he writes – “is to choose to negate the truth... and to persist in it”<sup>47</sup>.

Freedom is a prerequisite for the existence and development of both democracy and self-governance. But it does not mean thoughtless arbitrariness. On the basis of personalism, freedom is not an unlimited absolute value. It is an element in the totality of the human personality, which should be engaged in a variety of social goals, and in the implementation of other values in society, and in its structures<sup>48</sup>. Thanks to freedom, mankind can, and must, above all, seek the truth and good, and then, affirming them, assimilate them, and put them into practice. This is the essence of self-governance. Self-governance is alien to any falsehood,

any will to disregard the truth, which ultimately leads to anarchy. That is why the Lublin ethicist states “self-governance is the rule of the truth”<sup>49</sup>. The exponent of authentic self-governance

is the relation of freedom to the truth, and its proper goal is human self-fulfillment<sup>50</sup>. This also has its social implications. T. Styczeń writes “A ruler governs others, and does not dictate or command, when he or she obeys the truth: the truth about who the ruled person is in the first place, and about that without which he could not fulfill him or herself, that is, become fully him or herself. The ruler stands in the service of the truth about self-fulfillment. After all, the task of the law is nothing other than to express the truth about the conditions for self-fulfillment. The respect of the ruler for the truth about the ruled is expressed in respect for the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>47</sup> T. Styczeń, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości*, 123.

<sup>48</sup> J. Maritain, *Du régime temporel de la liberté*, Dedeclee de Brouwer, Paris 1935; S. Kowalczyk, *Wprowadzenie do myśli J. Maritaina*, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin 1992, 67.

<sup>49</sup> T. Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich*, 87.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, 88.

law, i.e. the rule of law”<sup>51</sup>. In this way, the rule of the truth becomes the natural plane of encounter and dialogue between the rulers with the governed. In it, self-governance and the rule of law are united – the order of the individual with social order<sup>52</sup>.

“To be, for a human being, is to govern” reads the quotation comprising the title of this article. Looking for what constitutes the identity of the human being, T. Styczeń claims that the human being exists “differently” and “higher”. His or her special standing among other beings is constituted by dignity, some elements of which are subjectivity, reason, and freedom. This discovery is the foundation of social thinking. Self-understanding is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for human self-fulfillment, for the human being to achieve the fullness of his or her identity. The condition of the full understanding of oneself – one’s own “self” as a subject capable of self-transcendence in the truth, who, as such, deserves respect from oneself and others – is the discovery of every other person as worthy of affirmation by him or herself. This is the prerequisite for obtaining a “definitive definition” of oneself<sup>53</sup>. T. Styczeń writes “I am the self among other selves, I am a self-governing subject among other self-governing subjects, a person among persons... a person in the world of persons”<sup>54</sup>. Therefore, in the name of the discovered truth about oneself – about one’s personal “self” – one should “transcend oneself towards every other”<sup>55</sup>. What allows the human being to become fully him or herself is love – creating love. The human being by his or her very nature is a being called on to a personal relationship with another. “Autonomy called for communion, self-dependence called for solidarity, solitude called for love – this is the name of the human being”<sup>56</sup> – he wrote.

The key to understanding the human being is ultimately to be found in love. In the anthropological reflection of T. Styczeń, the human being is fulfilled not by cutting him or herself off from the other, but through a relationship with the other. Community is here a constitutive dimension of person’s self-fulfillment<sup>57</sup>. Through love one realizes that the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, 87-88.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>53</sup> Idem, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości*, 121.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich*, 91.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, *Być sobą to przekraczać siebie*, 509.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości*, 140.

<sup>57</sup> R. Buttiiglione, *Mysł Karola Wojtyły*, trans. by Jarosław Merecki, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1996, 244.

“other” is not an enemy, a rival, or a competitor, but a neighbor. “This means, in other words”, – writes the ethicist from Lublin – “that the self reaches the fullness of its identity in acts which effectively express the attitude of solidarity with every other – individually and all together on the basis of their personal dignity”<sup>58</sup>. It is from love that the strength of a State originates. For it is the glue which binds all people into one great community. It is the only effective way to personalize all social bonds, and to achieve the common good. The ultimate role of the structures of authority is to give individuals the opportunity for self-fulfillment by “enacting the truth in love”. It is the unification of all on the basis of affirming in them what they are, and thus on the basis of the truth of their human existence<sup>59</sup>.

### Conclusions

The article was an attempt to comprehend the personalistic foundations of social authority according to Tadeusz Styczeń. Its considerations followed one path: discovering who the human being is, and how to “translate” what constitutes his or her deepest identity into the issue of self-governance, which is an important element in democracy, as the governing order closest to personalism. Local self-government does not operate in a conceptual vacuum. Its conception is conditioned by a number of philosophical assumptions, often adopted unconsciously. These include axiological assumptions which reflect a particular vision of the world, and especially a particular anthropology. Although T. Styczeń did not directly address the issue of local self-government in his texts, one can find a number of inspirations in his multi-threaded reflections, the taking up of which would facilitate the construction in modern societies of authority structures which are the most congruent with the nature of the person. The analyses of this Lublin ethicist, devoted to the problem of the subjective foundations of self-government, constitute a specific discourse in defense of the human person, and his or her dignity, as well as the right to self-fulfillment through the free coming to know and affirmation of the truth. They also point to the need for a comprehensive development of the individual, who fulfills him or herself to the fullest in his or her relations with others through effective love.

The principle of ethical personalism, according to which the human person must be affirmed for his or her own sake, has a social dimension *par excellence*, and therefore its

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<sup>58</sup> T. Styczeń, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności za siebie i drugich*, 95.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, *Problem człowieka problemem miłości*, 140-141.

importance should be emphasized in a special way in the sphere of social and political life. This can be done by affirming the human person's right to self-determination, and to everything through which he or she develops and strengthens him or herself as a self-governing entity. This is where we touch on the essence of self-governance in general. All programs of social action and public institutions are morally good only when they serve the human being – when they strengthen the creative subjectivity of the individual. In the light of the thoughts of T. Styczeń, this is what is the essence of their sense and moral values.

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***To Be, for a Human Being, is to Govern***  
**The Personalistic Foundations of Authority According to Tadeusz Styczeń**  
**Summary**

The author of this article discusses the subjective foundations of social power. He does so on the basis of Tadeusz Styczeń's texts. The thesis of the article is that the basic condition for exercising social authority (i.e. public, State, and political power) is to retain authority over oneself, to be a free, truth-driven, and self-governing entity. Of the three types of authority included within the scope of social power, the article will place particular emphasis on political authority in a democratic society.

Following the thoughts of T. Styczeń, the author attempts to provide an answer to the question of how to “translate” what constitutes the deepest identity of a person into the issue of self-governance, which is an important element in democracy, as the governing order closest to personalism.

**Keywords:** person, autonomy, democracy