

## Book Reviews

Roman Darowski. *Philosophical Anthropology: Outline of Fundamental Problems*. Translated from Polish by Łukasz Darowski SDS. Wydawnictwo Ignatianum [Editions of the Jesuit University Ignatianum at Cracow] \ Wydawnictwo WAM: Cracow, 2014.

Last year marked the appearance of an English-language book entitled *Philosophical Anthropology: Outline of Fundamental Problems*. It is, in actuality, an English translation of the most frequently reprinted work of the distinguished philosopher and expert on the history of Jesuit philosophy in Poland, Father Professor Roman Darowski. Although *Philosophical Anthropology: Outline of Fundamental Problems* is, excluding some of its parts, a translation rather than a new book, the fact of its appearance in English deserves to be noted and discussed, as the new English-language version will allow it to reach a significantly wider range of readers than before.<sup>1</sup>

The current publication of the book has been divided by the author into three parts. The first serves as an introduction and concerns meta-anthropological issues. It is important insofar as it reveals Darowski's approach to philosophical anthropology, which is not made sufficiently clear in its subsequent chapters, because their discussions focus on a series of postulates. Father Darowski holds that the roots of philosophical anthropology are to be sought in the basic questions that a human being formulates, addressing his or her existence: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I heading to? He emphasizes his belief that there are three indispensable constituents to the practice of philosophy: (1) recognition of the

1. Previous reviews of the discussed publication show its significance. See Stanisław Kowalczyk, „Filozofia człowieka Romana Darowskiego,” *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 45, no. 179–180 (2002): 113–116; Stanisław Ziemiański, „Romana Darowskiego filozofia człowieka,” *Logos i Ethos* no. 12–13 (2002): 219–23.

importance of philosophical tradition and of the solutions proposed during the course of its development; (2) acknowledgment of the cognitive value of external and internal experience; (3) acceptance of a complex methodology, which includes a descriptive stage—collecting and interpreting the basic data about “the human fact,” or “human phenomenology,” and an ontological stage, “human metaphysics,” which is supposed to lead to a comprehensive understanding of “the human fact” in the light of broadly defined philosophical principles, meaning in the light of a broadly construed ontic rationale. The last, but not least important, hallmark of Darowski’s approach to anthropological philosophy is its “sapientary” character, as Darowski assumes that an improved knowledge of human being should be transformative and determine the attitudes of its students. The author believes we do not have to choose, in line with Marcel’s frequently invoked distinction, between “to be” and “to have.” He proposes that we direct our existences so that we can both “be” and “possess.” “From the point of view of philosophical anthropology the ‘third way’ is the proper way, worthy of recommendation” (29).

The second and most extensive part of the publication discussed here presents the most important issues of concern to philosophical anthropology. Its subsequent chapters deal with the following issues: 1. “Humanity and the Animal Kingdom.” 2. “Human Corporeality.” 3. “The Spiritual Constituent of a Human Being.” 4. “The Relationship between the Spiritual Constituent and the Material Constituent.” 5. “Death and Immortality.” 6. “The Structure of the Human Mind and the Process of Intellectual Cognition.” 7. “Human Freedom.” 8. “The Human Person and His / Her Rights and Duties.” 9. “The Origin of Human Being.” 10. “Human Being and Values.” 11. “Human Being as a Creator of Culture.” 12. “Human Being as a Historical Being.” 13. “Human Being as a Dialogical Being.” 14. “Human Being as a Social Being.” 15. “Human Being as a Religious Being.” A specific theoretical approach, referred to as the “method of theses,” is adopted in this part. Rather than starting with a description of the fact of being human and then proceeding with philosophical interpretation and elucidation of this fact in the light of broad systemic decisions such as would be appropriate to a given approach, the author postulates a set of specific anthropological “theses.” Each thesis is, subsequently, subjected to linguistic and philosophical clarification, the *status quaestionis* and various relevant stances are discussed and, finally, the thesis initially propounded is argued for. This approach draws, ostensibly, on medieval scholastic tradition and its method of exposition, which involved the stages of advancing a thesis in response to a question, considering arguments *pro* and *contra*, proposing a

solution, most frequently different from the thesis proposed, and answering any difficulties arising in the arguments *pro* and *contra*. Fidelity to scholastic tradition is most visible in the substance of Father Darowski's deliberations. His solutions and their rationale follow in many respects the metaphysical and anthropological considerations of the Thomistic school. While the author does not conceal his adherence to this intellectual tradition, he does also strive to address the anthropological problems themselves, and to discuss those aspects of being human pointed to by late modern philosophical currents, such as the existential and dialogical mode(s) of human existence, the historicity of human being, or its relatedness to the sphere of values.

The presentation of philosophical anthropology's most important problems offered in this book emphasizes the universalistic character of classical Thomistic anthropology. This character is also brought to the fore in Father Darowski's affirmation of the personal character of human being, and of human personal dignity, in the form of the stress laid by him upon the compositeness of human nature, on human beings' intrinsic involvement in social life and culture, and on their existence's being focused on Transcendence. Yet, the author is clearly concerned with much more than promoting his own philosophical school. Fully aware of the importance of anthropological issues and the current turmoil around them, he finds in classical philosophy the right jumping-off points for asking the most important questions about human beings, as well as inspiration for trying to solving the great challenges involved.

It is possibly because of these concerns that the author altered the composition of the translated version. While the introductory chapter of the last Polish edition of *Philosophical Anthropology* (which constituted the basis of the discussed translation) has been left out, the author has expanded a paragraph devoted to unraveling human being through the prism of the properties of Absolute Being into a separate chapter. This chapter is significantly entitled "The Human Being—An Absolute?" The problem of what Father Darowski calls "human absoluteness" is put forward as his own contribution to the comprehension of human being, and turns out to be, ultimately, a particular manner of apprehending various manifestations of the human condition. A juxtaposition of the qualities of the temporary and imperfect entity which is the human being with the necessary and perfect being of the Absolute makes it possible for the author to emphasize at least a few basic traits that human beings share with the Absolute Being of Neo-Thomist philosophy—ones that may be referred to as constitutive of what is viewed in the book as human absoluteness. Father Darowski

considers manifestations of human absoluteness such human features as unlimited cognition and openness in the realm of freedom, unlimited possibilities of decision-making, unlimited cognition and will—through which is revealed the spiritual element of the human being, considered to be independent from material cognition and as transcending matter—as well as the natural inclination towards beauty, immortality ingrained in the spiritual constituent of the human—the latter being evinced by the human disposition toward eternal life—and a shared existence with (or participation in) God, a kind of metaphysical dissatisfaction, manifested in striving for a more complete grasp of truth and goodness, and God's engagement on the side of humans (to which the facts of religion and human dignity point). Elucidating those essential constituents of human being and human activity, shown in due proportions and viewed in the light of the relevant distinctions, and with all appropriate restrictions and qualifications, allows Father Darowski to assert that "it is possible to say that in some way a human being is absolute. One can claim so, because a human being really is so" (153). This makes it possible to conclude that the philosophical anthropology proposed by Father Darowski is indeed a philosophy of Absolute Being, and is primarily focused upon unveiling the different aspects, and particularities, of this absoluteness.

In other respects, the book mainly offers an outline of the most important theses of anthropology (whose accuracy and vindication can obviously always be debated) and, as such, is addressed above all to students, with the intention of serving as an anthropological compendium. It can serve as a basis for developing and systematizing the study of human nature and, at the same time, as a starting point for further inquiries into human being, by no means limited to the philosophical tradition embraced by Father Darowski himself. As observed above, Father Darowski himself also pursues knowledge of human beings via approaches outside of his own philosophical tradition.

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