

Human Soul in the Light of Czesław Stanisław Bartnik's Universalistic Personalism

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Abstract: The article presents a contemporary understanding of the human soul according to Czesław Stanisław Bartnik (1929–2020), the founder of universalistic personalism. The term “soul” has been understood in many different ways throughout the history of human thought, hence it still raises confusion today. It is sometimes dismissed as too “religious” and replaced by the word “ego” or “person.” It seems that a successful attempt to link the history of human thought with a contemporary understanding of the person is Bartnik’s personalistic system. The article groups Bartnik’s thoughts on the “human soul” into four main blocks: personalistic reflection on the history of the concept of “soul”; place of the soul in the structure of the contemporary person (real being); clarification of the significance of the soul’s “function” in the inner and outer world of an individual; the existence of a “social person” and – in a sense – a “social soul” i.e., the spiritual self-awareness of society (although there is no single common soul for all people). The analysis leads to the following conclusions: the terms “soul” and “person” are not synonymous today; the meaning of “person” is broader than that of “soul,” however, the “person” does not displace the “soul.” Putting it positively, the soul together with the body constitutes human nature, and thanks to this nature, there is a metaphysical personal “self” (ontic ego) which can be described as a “spiritual soul” or “spirit” (whereby the metaphysical “self” is inseparable from the “soul”) Man as a person expresses himself through body and soul, as well as the metaphysical self (which is present in the consciousness). Because of its “spiritual soul,” a person is constantly in development, transcends reality and is moving towards its ultimate fulfilment in the Communion of the Divine Persons. This is done by making the right moral choices, in conjunction with the Person of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: body, soul, spirit, self, human, person, personalism, system

Some contemporary thinkers who try to describe the mystery of the human being seem to believe that the term “soul” is “outdated,” not “existential” enough, too “philosophical,” or merely “religious.” This raises the questions: Is this really the case? Should modern humanities abandon it for some other concepts, e.g., “person”? In fact, such trends have already been observed. They are supported by the opinion that the popular statement attempting to summarize the anthropological idea that man is composed of body and soul now seems too simple, or unclear, because of insightful researchers who believe it has never been fully explained what the body and the soul actually are. Many religions use this composite to express the fundamental truth that man is formed from elements belonging to the earthly (temporal) order and from elements of the supernatural (eternal, divine) reality.¹

¹ Cf. Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 33.

Human existence is primal in relation to all terms; the mystery of reality precedes terminology and, therefore, all terms are in some sense secondary and they are constantly being clarified proportionally to the development of human perception, culture, systems, and methods of thinking. Analyzing the history of thought on the essence of man, one can say, somewhat simplifying, that the fact that humans transcend the world of matter was attempted to be conveyed by the following notions: soul, ego, person.² Today, the semantic fields of these words overlap to some extent, but it is appropriate to say that they have to be specified more precisely or mystery has to be expressed with new terms. It seems that the most adequate word to describe man as a whole is “person.” This leads to the problem of how the soul should be understood in this context and how this notion differs from the term “person.” After all, they are used to define the same reality.

The discovery of personalistic reality gave rise to various personalistic movements. Reverend Professor Czesław Stanisław Bartnik (1929–2020), philosopher and theologian, believed that a person contains the codes and structures of all things, the key to the Universe.³ Therefore, he sought to present an original and independent system – universalistic personalism – a direction of thoughts in which a “person” is the hermeneutic key, the cognitive, methodological, and praxeological key to the understanding of the whole reality. Within this system, he developed personalistic anthropology (personology, prosopology), a branch of anthropology that treats man as a person. He expressed the conviction that the description of a human person is crucial for understanding the entire existence and that the structure of a person helps to explain the universe, history, existence, technology, civilization, culture, art, communication, cognition, understanding, etc.⁴

Despite the fact that there are various publications on Czesław Bartnik’s personalistic thought,⁵ it seems no reasonably comprehensive study on the soul itself within his system has so far been published. He himself took a great interest in the subject until the end of his life and created further concepts of thoughts.⁶ Accepting the ontic nature of a person (Bartnik opposed the understanding of a person as a mere collection of “personal qualities”) and continuing the dualistic thought of the body-soul composite.⁷ Therefore, if through the person, as Bartnik claimed, one can see new senses of the world, it is worth considering the presence of soul in this key. The research method is the hermeneutic analysis of selected texts.

² Cf. Bartnik, *Metodologia teologiczna*, 114–115.

³ Bartnik, “Personalizm uniwersalistyczny,” 55.

⁴ Bartnik, *Hermeneutyka personalistyczna*, 111–112; *Metodologia teologiczna*, 114–115; *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 340, 347; cf. Kowalczyk, “Personalistyczne rozumienie dziejów,” 83–88.

⁵ At this point, it is worth mentioning the bibliographical collection of Bartnik’s works and analyses of his thoughts published by Mirosław Kowalczyk: *Działalność naukowa i pisarska Czesława Stanisława Bartnika*.

⁶ See Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 177.

⁷ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229.

1. “Soul” at the Beginning of Solving the Mystery of a Person

In creating universalistic personalism, Bartnik sought not to erase the history of human thought but to extract the main ideas and intuitions from it, searching for the grains of truth. His goal was not to polemicize or create an eclecticism but learn as much as possible about reality: in the case in question – the mystery of man.

Bartnik noted that the term “soul” already appeared in various ancient cultures and religious and philosophical systems, which listed different numbers of elements that make up man, such as:

- a) one – matter or spirit – monism;
- b) two – body and soul – dualism;
- c) three – body, soul, and spirit – e.g. classical Hellenistic philosophy (Orphic, Pythagorean, and Platonic tradition), Neoplatonism;
- d) four – earth, air, fire, water (the elements of the world) – Ionian school of philosophy;
- e) five – material body, subtle body, outer (sensory) psyche, inner (reflective) psyche, soul (subject, ego) – ancient Indian anthropology; body, immortal spirit, psyche, double, mummy form – ancient Egyptian culture.⁸

The term “soul” was used to express the idea that there is a reality hidden in man that allows him to transcend successive “worlds”: inanimate matter, biosphere, zoosphere, psychosphere, and eventually also the anthroposphere, which, however, is not the end point of his development.⁹ Learning about his mystery of transcending the surrounding reality, man tried to express it with appropriate words, which is why, in addition to the notion of “body” (the material part of man) and “soul” (the immaterial part of man), he introduced the notion of “spirit,” “ego,” to gradually reach the mystery defined by the word “person.” Bartnik readily listed and discussed successive “unveilings” of the mystery of human existence, described in the history of human thought using various notions. It is worth checking, together with Bartnik, what the tradition says on this matter, paying attention to the place of “soul.”

Body (Greek: *sarks, soma*; Latin: *caro, corpus*). To man, seeking the truth about himself, matter and his own body, made from this matter, seem the most real existing thing. Man recognized that through his body, he was rooted in natural world, wildlife and the universe, but he also found that it was his own body that distinguished him from any other reality.¹⁰ If his body was made of the matter, the cause of his subjectivization was seen in the “soul” (Aristotle).

⁸ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 149–150; *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 396–398; “Osoba” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 12; *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229.

⁹ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 234.

¹⁰ Cf. Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 233.

Psychism. It was noted that the order of matter is transcended by living beings, especially psychic ones. They already exist in simple biological forms and become more perfect in more complex forms, which have the possibility of indeterminism, some forms of cognition, decisions, instinct, senses, feelings, and creativity manifested in adaptation to the environment;¹¹ some of them have the ability to communicate (in simple forms, starting with the world of plants and the zoosphere).

Soul (Greek: *psyche*; Latin: *anima*) – the living element began to be called “soul” in the broadest sense. For this reason, philosophical biology distinguishes plant (vegetative), animal (sensory), and human (rational) souls.¹²

Human soul. Along with human mindfulness, a unique mysterious complexity was recognized in man (distinguishing humans from the zoosphere): inner depth (microcosm) and outer reality (macrocosm), matter and the possibility of transcending it; at the same time, it was understood that there is no hidden antithesis in the body-soul composite.

Spirit (Greek: *nous, pneuma*; Latin: *animus, spiritus, mens, genius*). It was acknowledged that man has an ability to perform higher mental acts, a factor that allows participation in God (in addition to the body and psyche);¹³ sometimes “soul” and “spirit” meant the same thing.¹⁴

Bartnik enriched his analysis of philosophical anthropological thought by referring to the revelation contained in the Bible. In the Hebrew tradition, he found mainly the dichotomous concept stating that man consists of body and soul (Hebrew: *bašar* and *nefes*), in the Hellenistic trichotomous tradition – elements such as body, soul, and spirit (Hebrew: *bašar, nefes, ruah*).¹⁵ Bartnik also noted that although a completely unified position did not exist, Christian tradition evolved towards dichotomy (it occurred in the Middle Ages, under the influence of Aristotle’s hylomorphism¹⁶), but did not abandon what was referred to by the term “spirit” (Hebrew: *ruah*; Greek: *pneuma* or *nous*; Latin: *spiritus*).¹⁷ It was believed that thanks to what is referred to by the word “spirit,” man can unite with the Spirit of God, with the Holy Trinity, and can live a spiritual life, that is, a life in the Holy Spirit

11 Cf. Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 234.

12 Kowalewski, “Dusza,” 104. Bartnik was aware of the immense richness of the tradition of human thought on the notion of “soul.” While creating *sui generis* syntheses, he simultaneously made certain simplifications. For more information on the understanding of *nefes* and *psyche* in Greek philosophy, see Lemański – Goniszewski (ed.), *Problem psychofizyczny*, 44–53; on Hebrew anthropology, see Tresmontant, *Problem duszy*, 63–84.

13 Kamiński, “Duch. W filozofii,” 276.

14 Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 396.

15 Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229.

16 Langemeyer, *Antropologia teologiczna*, 119.

17 Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229. The Christian tradition distinguished three creations of man: corporeal man (Greek: *hylikos*, Latin: *carnalis*), psychic man (Greek: *psychikos*, Latin: *psychicus*), and spiritual man (Greek: *pneumatikos*, Latin: *spiritualis*); Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 150.

(cf. Rom 8:9).¹⁸ As strongly emphasized by Bartnik, the fact that Christianity adopted the Hebrew thesis according to which all these elements constitute one man is also important.¹⁹

Bartnik believed that Catholic theology did not pay enough attention to how the soul is understood in the New Testament as it focused mainly on philosophical thought. This is where he saw an important role for personalistic hermeneutics, which would make it possible to see more fully the unity of the body-soul composite, where the body signifies the earthly dimension (creation) and the soul – the heavenly dimension (salvation history, eternity).²⁰

Person (Greek: *persona*). At this point, it is important to mention the term “person,” which has become central to Bartnik’s thought, and thus essential to his understanding of the notion of “soul” (and the reality behind this concept). Bartnik repeatedly mentions that man was called a person by the Christian thinker Anicius Manlius Boethius (480–524), who provided the following definition: “*persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia*” (“a person is an individual substance of a rational nature”; PL 64, 1337–1354).²¹ The notion of “person” has somehow become inconvenient. The development of this term led to the obvious question of what to do with the “soul,” since until now it was believed that man is an embodied soul. By introducing the notion of the “person,” philosophers started to emphasize individualism and subjectivism and, as a result, some were afraid that the concept of “community” would be erased.²² Attempts were made to equate “soul” with “person,” i.e., it was argued that man is a person in the space of the soul (because, unlike man, the matter is not rational). However, the term “soul” does not show all the colors of human personality, uniqueness, and originality. Thus, the definition of a person was developed and clarified. In the Middle Ages, Richard of St Victor (born around 1110, died 1173) and St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) played an important role and brought the concept of a person closer to the Divine Being, which constitutes Subsistence (Self-existence).²³

Ego. Over time, people began to look for a word other than “soul” to describe the depth of man in order to detach anthropological reflection from theology. René Descartes (1596–1650) was the first to reflect on this matter. Many different concepts of the ego followed, starting from metaphysical to psychological approaches; today,

¹⁸ For more information on the merging of the world of the human spirit with the life in God, see, e.g., Miczyński, “*Życie duchowe jako szczyt osoby*,” 211–215.

¹⁹ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229. The Christian tradition distinguished three creations of man: corporeal man (Greek: *hylikos*, Latin: *carnalis*), psychic man (Greek: *psychikos*, Latin: *psychicus*), and spiritual man (Greek: *pneumatikos*, Latin: *spiritualis*); Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 150.

²⁰ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 398–399.

²¹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 78.

²² Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 35.

²³ See Góźdz, *Teologia człowieka*, 180–181.

the ego is understood as hidden in ignorance. It is emphasized that the “I” is expressed in creativity and shaped in relationships with others.²⁴ Bartnik, on the other hand, takes the position that the ego should not be deprived of the metaphysical dimension (as discussed later in this paper).

While discussing the history of anthropological thought, Bartnik was aware that these concepts were not precise enough;²⁵ there are still many ambiguities, but they signify the mysterious and very complex structure of man. The notion of “soul” expresses the potentiality of transcendence of man, but it does not exhaust all dimensions of his existence. Bartnik was convinced that what was needed was a modern adequate reflection and an attempt to describe man in a fairly comprehensive manner. Hence, he dedicated his entire life to defining the human person. It can be said that, ultimately, he referred to the old notion of “soul.” It remains to be debated whether personalism clarifies or rather “obscures” them.

2. Soul as Prosopophany

In his system, Czesław Stanisław Bartnik refers to traditional concepts and creates a *sui generis* synthesis – not as eclecticism (he wanted to avoid this), but as an original thought on the genesis, essence, and fulfillment of man. It can be said that, in a sense, he inscribes the above-mentioned list of traditional concepts in the structure of the person’s existence. He sees them as elements that gradually reveal the mystery of a person. In a sense, such elements are “stages” or categories of the person’s existence.²⁶ They lead to subjective concretization and, at the same time, show the path of human transcendence towards some kind of eschatological fulfillment as a person, including in other persons and beings. Therefore, Bartnik enumerates the following terms or expressions: body and soul (instead of using the term “spirit,” Bartnik more often uses the expression “spiritualized soul” or “spiritual soul” as he identifies the notion of “spirit” with the personal metaphysical ego – this will be explained later in this paper); rational nature; substance; self-existence; subjectivity; personality; ego (personal metaphysical ego); theatrical prosopology; person (Bartnik listed these elements in his monograph titled *Personalizm*).²⁷ At this point, it is necessary to explain how Bartnik understands “nature.” In accordance with Christian thought, he assumes that it represents “[...] the whole of reality, the whole of

²⁴ For more information on different approaches to the ego, see, e.g., the following publications: Kobierzycki, *Jaźń i tożsamość*; cf. Miczyński, “Ważniejsze ujęcia jaźni,” 205–210.

²⁵ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 150.

²⁶ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165–166.

²⁷ See Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 149–178.

creation [...] and the human race ('rational nature'), subjectivized in a special manner in individuals."²⁸ Thus, one can conclude that Bartnik understands "human nature" in a supra-individual way but, at the same time, recognizes the uniqueness of each person.

Bartnik's thought tries to form man using the above-mentioned concepts or expressions and "mold" him into a logical and coherent whole (of course – it is always debatable whether the combination of individual terms, burdened with philosophical and theological discussion, clarifies or obscures the image of a person); following Bartnik's thought one can see that according to him:

- a) matter becomes the material form of the human body;
- b) the body is mysteriously linked to the soul; together, they make up "human nature"²⁹ and create space for other existential elements (structures);³⁰
- c) being a substance gives independence in materiality (i.e., otherness);³¹
- d) self-existence (independence in existence) makes a person exist;³²
- e) subjectivity (resulting from inbreeding evolution, which is a consequence of substantiality and self-existence) makes man a unique form of a being existing towards the inside, towards the infinity of the inner self, forming in him ontic (registering and cognitive) awareness;³³
- f) for man, personality is the foundation of self-expression, cognition, and self-knowledge, a way of being, a principle of behaviors and external actions, but it also gives him the ability to enter into himself (immanentization) and into the reality higher than himself (transcendentalization), thus providing the basis for the formation of interpersonal relationships or entire societies;³⁴

²⁸ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 156.

²⁹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 156.

³⁰ It should be mentioned that Bartnik was not strictly a philosopher but a philosophical theologian. He used traditional philosophical terms and added Christian concepts to them. Moreover, trying to look at the whole reality through the prism of the modern understanding of a person, he presented these concepts "in the function" of personalism. This was also the case with "human nature." He claimed that "[...] a human person is not only subjectivized in a concrete body, linked to the soul, but also belongs to the totality of beings, to the human race in history, to nature in the sense of bios, the natural world, and the universe. Through his nature, man is rooted in the whole reality created from the atom to the Galaxies, from protology to eschatology" (*Personalizm*, 156).

³¹ In philosophical, but not naturalistic, terms: concretized human nature, individuation, separate, integral, autonomous being existing in itself; substance provides the basis for individuality; Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 159–160. It can be assumed that Bartnik confirms and develops Wincenty Granat's (1900–1979) thought on the great importance of the view on the substantiality of soul and body for the theory of Christian personalism; see Granat, *Personalizm chrześcijański*, 142–144.

³² Man is reality, the highest act of being (Greek: *hypostasis*, Latin: *subsistentia*); full self-existence is in the Non-created Persons; however, it should be noted that in personalism, self-existence always appears as a gift to another self-existence (i.e., it has nothing to do with isolationism); cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 160–161.

³³ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 162.

³⁴ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 163.

- g) all “stages” and structures lead to the personal ego (all these “elements” mentioned above coexist in it); it is the fundamental structure of a human person;³⁵
- h) man has a role to fulfill (theatrolological prosopology), which allows him to develop, to accomplish a mission marked by moral value (a person is thus free and creative and can “happen” inside and outside of himself or herself; a person himself or herself can become a work);³⁶
- i) man heads towards the “ultimate fulfillment in the eschatological person,”³⁷ that is, by playing his part, he becomes his own person, he becomes eternal.³⁸

It is worth noting that Bartnik recognizes dynamism, constant development, transcendence of the self, and a path of fulfillment heading towards eternity in the structure of a person. In his teachings, he clearly emphasizes that in Christian thought, the inner self of a person is linked to history and not, as former cultures assumed, only to nature.³⁹

According to Bartnik, man does not *have* a person, soul, or spirit (the metaphysical and empirical ego) but he *is* a person expressing himself with his body, his soul, and his spirit.⁴⁰ That is, they are *sui generis* prosopophanies (exposures, articulations) of a person.

And although, according to Bartnik’s thought, man is a person,⁴¹ and “a person is whole man,”⁴² the term “person” is not entirely synonymous with “man.” The person defines the manner and category of his existence⁴³ and constitutes “the basic

³⁵ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165. It seems that when describing the layers of human being, Bartnik refers to the thought of Romano Guardini (1885–1968), who also proposes a similar (but only three-stage) gradation in the structure of a person: form, unity (individuality), personality (self-awareness expressed in acts of cognition, will and actions, which, when spiritualized, creates spiritual life); see Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka*, 186–189. Bartnik also develops the thought of W. Granat, who enumerated the following elements in the description of a person: unity, integrity, substantiality, and self-existence; see Granat, *Osoba ludzka. Próba definicji*, 283–292.

³⁶ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 167, 175–176; Bartnik emphasizes that the moral component is often overlooked in the description of man. Personalism explains the division of spirits into good and bad ones, into those that would voluntarily say yes to God with love and those that would defy God. It is a mystery of free will, including of those who were never to be born (an embryo also has the body and soul, as well as a person, i.e., the metaphysical, subjective “I” even though it is not yet expressed in the empirical “I”). Bartnik believes that the unborn will also have a free choice; see Bartnik, “*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 22–23; *Osoba i personalizm*, 43.

³⁷ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 158. In other words, man, who is a person from the very moment of conception, is constantly developing to find fulfillment as a person in the eschatological dimension.

³⁸ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 177.

³⁹ Cf. Bartnik, *Osoba i historia*, 34; *Personalizm*, 177.

⁴⁰ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229–230. A similar thought – about the body as an area and means of expression of a person – can be found in the works by Karol Wojtyła (see *Osoba i czyn*, 244) and by Józef Pastuszka (see *Dusza ludzka*, 112–114).

⁴¹ Cf. Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 45.

⁴² Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 35.

⁴³ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 324.

structure of man, more than corporeality and spirituality.”⁴⁴ Therefore, how should it be understood? Is not a person a real being? On the contrary, Bartnik has always believed that not only does a person mean value and dignity⁴⁵ but he or she is of an ontic nature, a person exists in himself or herself, he or she is ontically self-existent.⁴⁶ He perceived, however, that man in the person (i.e., already as a person) has not yet fully fulfilled himself, but he is only developing, creating himself, being created,⁴⁷ and heading towards infinity. He is already a person, but he will ultimately find fulfillment in the eschaton. In a person one can see an ontic gradation of subsistence:

- a) body and soul (human nature);⁴⁸
- b) the metaphysical, personal “I” (inseparably linked to the soul) – being: the supra-synthesis of the body and soul, “absolute subjectivization,” and an ontic state fulfilled in eternity.⁴⁹

However, the spiritual life of man is such a great mystery that here, on earth, the said ego (linked to the soul and body) is able to express it only partially.⁵⁰

In other words, a person is a real, dynamic being that is constantly finding fulfillment. He or she is not limited to either body or soul or ego. According to the descriptive definition proposed by Bartnik, a person is “[...] an individual corporeal and spiritual subsistence, internalizing itself into its ego and, at the same time, transcending itself to fulfill itself in other persons and beings [...]. It is a [...] somatic and spiritual, immanent and transcendent, individual and social, and essential and existential substance that develops thematically in depth, upward and into infinity [...] it is the Alpha, the Center, and the Omega of all reality.”⁵¹

This raises the question of how Bartnik’s thought should be interpreted. How should his words about a person being “the Alpha, the Center, and the Omega of all reality” be understood? Is it philosophical, theological, or rather poetic language? God introduces Himself in the Revelation using the words “the Alpha and the Omega” (cf. Rev 1:8). At the philosophical level, such an expression seems to be incomprehensible, considering a person to be an absolute being. Assuming, on the other hand,

⁴⁴ Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 35, 275.

⁴⁵ Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 42.

⁴⁶ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229; Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 45.

⁴⁷ Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 34, 274–275.

⁴⁸ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 156. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Bartnik understands human nature as “the human race [...], subjectivized in a special way in individuals” (*ibidem*, 156).

⁴⁹ Bartnik (*Osoba i personalizm*, 42) argues: “[...] body and soul and the metaphysical ‘I’ as an ontic supra-synthesis of body and soul, as an absolute subjectivization, and as an omegal ontic state.” The expression “absolute subjectivization” and the term “omegal” are associated with the Absolute. It seems that Bartnik uses a mental shortcut here. His point is not that the human person is absolute (that would be untrue), but that the person is ultimately subjectivized in the Absolute and ultimately finds fulfillment in It. Of course, this is an interpretation, and other analysts of Bartnik’s thought may disagree with it or find the language ungrounded or incomprehensible.

⁵⁰ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 230.

⁵¹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 178.

that Bartnik uses theological language, one would have to conclude that he identifies the human person with God – this would also be a misinterpretation. It seems to be a metaphor, poetic language or a mental shortcut (probably too big of a shortcut for many); as a result, instead of clarifying the term “person,” it may further obscure it. I think Bartnik wanted to emphasize the greatness of each human person united with the person of Jesus Christ, God-man who is the Center of the whole reality. Bartnik repeatedly used capital letters to emphasize the importance of a fact or subject under study. He did it in an arbitrary, deliberately intriguing way, which is not, however, clear to many researchers. This key should also be understood in terms of vocabulary, the creation of neologisms and expressions that are not popular and, for some, confusing (e.g., *alpha*, *omega*).

The question that arises here is: what is the constitutive element of a person? Bartnik points out that it is the existential independence (subsistence) of the metaphysical “I.” A person is “someone” who is subsisting, it is the subsisting “I,”⁵² it is the above-mentioned mysterious supra-synthesis in the subsisting ego.⁵³ It should also be noted that Bartnik understands the ego dynamically: it is both a constitutive and an “omega” element.⁵⁴ This metaphysical “I” (spirit) is inseparably linked to the soul (which becomes a “spiritual soul,” or a “spiritualized soul,” as further discussed in the subsequent section of this paper).

It is worth analyzing some of Bartnik’s thought concepts on the mystery of a human person in order to answer the following question in this context: what relationship exists between the multidimensionality of a person and his or her soul?

According to Bartnik, “the basic structures of the world of the person” are:⁵⁵

- a) immanence – unspeakable depth;
- b) creativity – the dimension of the act (Latin: *agere*) and work (*operari* – work); creativity – *ad intra* and *ad extra*;
- c) correlationism – individualism and society; a person is by nature in relationship with other people;
- d) morality – of an ontic, personality-forming nature; positive – develops a person; negative – leads to the state of “anti-person”;
- e) relationship with God – religiousness, a person immerses himself or herself in the life in the Holy Trinity; he or she can only fulfill himself or herself personally

⁵² Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165; Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 286–287; Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 128.

⁵³ Bartnik, “Osoba,” 885; *Studies in personalistic system*, 42–43.

⁵⁴ Czesław Bartnik (*Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 332) states: “The ego is the omega, as well as constitutive, element of man.” This quote shows the complexity of Bartnik’s language, his comparisons, metaphors, and mental shortcuts. This is because interpreting this sentence according to the rules of pure philosophical logic may imply that it contains a paradox. Bartnik seems to have been inspired to reflect on the “omega” dimension of the created world, including the human person, by Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955); cf. Płużański, *Teilhard de Chardin*, 114; Bartnik, *Teilhardyzm jako historia uniwersalna*, 48. Bartnik may also refer directly to the symbolic name of God that appears in the Revelation (see Rev 1:8).

⁵⁵ This division can be found in: *Osoba i personalizm*, 43–46.

in God who is also personal; it should be added that this relationship between the person of man with the Divine Persons, Holy Trinity, exists through the person of Jesus Christ.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Bartnik enumerates the following “spheres of the world of a person”:⁵⁷

- f) “mental world” – cognitive, awareness, intellect, reason, intuition, mental creativity, pursuit of the truth;
- g) “aspiring world” – aspiration (telematic dimension) and related goodness (agatic dimension); freedom, choice, self-determination, self-purpose;
- h) “agapetic (love) dimension” – a person’s ability to love (Greek: *agape* – love);
- i) “kallonic dimension” – personalism claims that in the Holy Trinity the Divine Person creatively admires the other two Persons; the person is the highest form of beauty; it is the path to beauty, the co-creation of beauty, and the admiration of the person (Greek: *kallos* – beauty);
- j) “dimension of act and work”;
- k) “dimension of freedom”;
- l) “existential dimension” – dynamic; created by sequence and continuity.

Undoubtedly, from a philosophical point of view, the above-mentioned divisions quoted verbatim may seem to be illogical and lack a clearly defined division criterion. It appears that Bartnik created mental concepts, often containing metaphors and symbols; he modified them in many places, not bothering to refine them formally. This can be considered a shortcoming, but at the same time, one has to acknowledge that Bartnik’s goal was to describe the multidimensionality of a person as fully as possible. Also in a poetic way. Therefore, it may seem that from this perspective, according to Bartnik, “soul” somehow becomes a concept that is too “metaphysical” and a bit too limited and that has little substance. But, is this really the case?

3. Prosopic Significance of the Soul

The development of the description of a person makes it increasingly important to find an answer to the following question: how does a person relate to his or her soul? Until the end of Bartnik’s life, the problem of this relationship had not yet been sufficiently solved by theologians. He argued that a person cannot be reduced to the body or the soul alone.⁵⁸ Moreover, human nature is neither the soul nor the body alone, but it is a body-soul composite in a bizarre internal unity that experiences exaltation

⁵⁶ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, II, 114.

⁵⁷ This division can be found in: Bartnik, *Szkice do systemu personalistycznego*, 61–63.

⁵⁸ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 228–229.

in a person.⁵⁹ Therefore, the “person” is a broader concept; it is the structural fulfillment of man. A person is subjectivized in a concrete body linked to the soul, and through his or her nature (body and soul) he or she is also rooted in the entire created reality, in the universe – from its beginning until the end of creation.⁶⁰

According to Bartnik, a person is not a third element of man – besides the body and soul – but his ontological modality (i.e., mode of existence), synthesis (after biological death – potential synthesis), and ecstasy towards transcendent being. Therefore, there is no real difference between “person” and “soul” – only a virtual one, which gives rise to the conceptual distinction between “soul” and “person” in *Misterium Człowieka*.⁶¹ This means that “soul” and “person” refer to the same real being, the same man, and other terms enable a deeper understanding of his complexity. If “a person expresses himself or herself through his or her soul” and the person has a multidimensional structure, then what is the significance of the soul? We can try to describe its meaning using several terms.

The soul linked to the body is human nature. Bartnik believes that the body-soul composite constitutes the “human nature” (the principle of man’s existence and action), although nature itself is not a complete human person, but becomes such when one takes into account the “spirit,”⁶² i.e. the metaphysical *ego* (which is inseparably linked to the soul). Bartnik wrote: “I believe that if one wants to preserve this dualism: body and soul, and at the same time accept the ontic nature of the person, then one has to subject the concept of the soul to a particularly thorough analysis,”⁶³ In his view, the body-soul composite is a special case of nature (the whole of creation, the entire reality), which becomes rational and free, which as its goal is set to transform into a personal being, its destiny, into someone final. For this reason, the human person – with regard to its nature – is an eschatology, a fulfillment, an end. The body and soul form a dyad oriented towards the “eschatic” human person; neither constitutes a personal whole (although the soul is the foundation for the identity of a person).⁶⁴ The body and soul culminate in a somatic and spiritual supra-synthesis, i.e. in the personal metaphysical “I” (which determines the existence

⁵⁹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 157.

⁶⁰ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 156; Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 423.

⁶¹ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 423.

⁶² Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 156; Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229; Bartnik, “*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 13; see Rom 1:3; 5:5; 1 Cor 2:13–16; 15:44ff.; Eph 4:23; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12.

⁶³ Cf. Bartnik, “*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 12. Bartnik (see *Osoba i personalizm*, 42) always tried to emphasize the ontic nature of the person, as he feared that some may understand the term “person” only as a value, dignity, awareness, or even only as a name (pure concept) which does not refer to reality, but is – in a sense – only a “linguistic construct.” One can agree that Bartnik is right, but one should also note that he himself chooses to use the metaphorical term “social person” (to describe e.g. society, nation, the Church), while slightly inclining, in a manner of speaking, towards idealism (this will be discussed in more detail later in this paper).

⁶⁴ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155–157.

of a person). At the same time, this metaphysical “I” would not exist if it were not for the body and soul.⁶⁵ In other words, the body and soul are co-relative to the human person.⁶⁶

According to Bartnik, *the soul performs “omegal functions” and the subjectivizing function*. The body, which has a secondary, spatio-temporal and transient self-existence, is linked to the soul. It enables the person to create himself or herself historically and empirically. It performs all “alphal functions” (initial functions) – from the first zygote.⁶⁷ Bartnik believes that today, contrary to past traditions, it should be said that matter itself is perfection of being, giving it potentiality, initialness, openness to the future and receptivity to transcendence; it is a “sacrament of the spirit.” The body, then, as the more complete realization of matter, is a prological creative and existential movement.⁶⁸ The soul, on the other hand, performs all “omegal functions” (Bartnik’s term), ultimate functions, final functions.⁶⁹ It is a concretization of reality with properties different from matter. It is a pure, simple being which subjectivizes the sphere of awareness, cognition, will, drives, life, decisions, higher feelings. The body and soul together constitute one and the same subjectivity.⁷⁰ One can repeat after Bartnik that “the individual soul is the basis for subjectivization of material being in a human manner.”⁷¹ Bartnik tries to use the terms “alphal functions” and “omegal functions” to describe man as both constantly being a person and, at the same time, becoming a person according to the plan of God. As mentioned, the adjectives “alphal” and “omegal” may not be convincing to some, as they are too burdened by associations with the Book of Revelation and the expression “the Alpha and the Omega” used therein to refer to God (Rev 1:8). Their use may be viewed as ascribing divine attributes to the human person. It should only be added that the guiding thought was likely to show the developmental dynamism of the human person (the capacity for

⁶⁵ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 244.

⁶⁶ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155. These deliberations seem fairly complicated, as when he uses the word “soul,” Bartnik sometimes emphasizes the immaterial dimension of man (i.e., among others, the entirety of the psychological life), at other times he emphasizes the aspects of the supernatural and immortality, yet other times he emphasizes the immateriality linked inseparably to the metaphysical “I,” that is, to the personal ego (to the spirit, to the spiritual soul). This does not mean that Bartnik changed his views, but that he referred to the traditional understanding, giving it his own interpretation. Of course, this does not make it easier for the reader to understand Bartnik’s view on the issue. This paper attempts to present to some extent these nuances, which at the same time can become a subject of discussion. In fact, Bartnik himself wanted for his thought to spark a debate.

⁶⁷ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155, 158.

⁶⁸ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 151–153.

⁶⁹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155. Elsewhere, Bartnik (*Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 423) states *expressis verbis* that “The person is the omegal point.” As has already been mentioned in this paper, this term – typical for Bartnik – may seem controversial. Going deep into the hermetic and original language of Bartnik, one can see a certain cohesion and orthodoxy, but it is clear why some believe that introducing neologisms does not help explain the already very complex issues.

⁷⁰ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 151–153, 155.

⁷¹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 154.

continuous transcendence) towards the eschatological reality (possibly inspired by the thought of J. Ratzinger⁷²).

According to Bartnik, the *soul is the “time,” “place,” “behavior”⁷³ of man*. A small comment needs to be added here. As mentioned, Bartnik often switched from metaphysical language to poetic and mystical, metaphorical, symbolic, biblical, etc. language. The quoted terms may be surprising and for many – on the grounds of classical philosophy – unacceptable. When trying to understand his thought, one can see an effort to expand the boundaries of the meanings of concepts (in this case, the concept of “soul”). Undoubtedly, combining various types of language – philosophical, biblical, theological, poetic – may often seem controversial, or even onerous. Bartnik wanted to emphasize that the soul includes elevated existence, mental awareness, self-awareness, reflective thinking, self-determination, self-decision-making, inner self-realization, and thus transcendence of the world of the body. Nevertheless, the soul is not the source of all this, because – as stressed by Bartnik – it is not the soul that loves, but the person. The soul is a way towards subjectivization and internalization of reality. It is a place of inner activity, the deepest foundation of the mind, will, memory, heart, understanding, all mental acts, the aesthetic sense, identity, continuation of empirical existence and opening oneself to the extrahuman and superhuman world (spiritual soul). It is a place, time and means of human creativity and agency, of self-expression, of creation of culture and technology. At the same time, this action somehow shapes the soul and causes it to develop.⁷⁴ The soul is somehow connected to the world of feelings, passions, unconsciousness, science, art, spirituality, morality and religion.⁷⁵ In other words, the soul is the place where all structures of the world of a person, listed in the previous section of this paper, are created.

The soul is the supermaterial being of man. According to Bartnik, the soul is a result of creation processes, which are aimed at constituting man as a person. It is “the supermaterial being of man, albeit always in the womb of matter;” “a being with its own existence,” “an indivisible being.”⁷⁶ Through the soul, humanity transcends into personality, into a person.⁷⁷ In other words, the soul allows man to transcend and participate in the supernatural world.

*Unbreakable connection with the spirit (the metaphysical ego) and openness to the world of grace.*⁷⁸ As mentioned previously, Bartnik, who followed the body-soul

72 This issue – the eschatological vision of the soul – is the subject of the following publication: Składanowski, *Ciało, dusza, duch* (see the entirety of that publication).

73 These terms can be found in: Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 404.

74 Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 154–155.

75 Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 34.

76 Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155.

77 Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 158.

78 According to Bartnik (“*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 13), “one should discern some kind of sameness between the spirit and the metaphysical ego.” The spirit and the metaphysical ego are two aspects of the same being, which determines the personal existence of man; Bartnik calls this being the “spirit-ego”

duality, did not reject the spirit, but saw it as closely linked to the human soul, which he expressed via terms “soul-spirit,” “spiritual soul,” “spiritualized soul,”⁷⁹ “spiritually egofied soul.”⁸⁰ According to him, the spirit (the metaphysical ego, the personal ontic “I”⁸¹) gives the soul perfection of being. This means that the spirit is a “spirit of the soul,” its subjective concretization. The soul alone – without the spirit – could be understood as a perfect, pure, but anonymous spiritual form. Although it is a means of individualization of man, since it is itself intrinsically one being (a unique form), it also has its generality. Absolute personal individuality comes, in turn, from the spirit, that is, from the ontic (metaphysical) ego. The soul-spirit is a “pure” being, a reality which transcends the material, an absolutizing form of being.⁸² The spirit is therefore an even more inner dimension of the soul, an openness to the world of grace.⁸³ Through it, man becomes a complete person. It is the spirit that defines the whole of man and gives him perfection of being, relationship with God and other persons, the highest mystery.⁸⁴

Gift of God. In the body-spiritual soul dyad, the spiritual soul (soul-spirit) has precedence in terms of reality as the source of existence of the human being, who

and claims that it empirizes itself in the body, in the psyche, and fulfills the human being that is immanent in creation and transcends the world towards the Divine Persons; cf. *ibidem*, 13. It is worth mentioning here that in Bartnik’s thoughts one can find a certain omission – an inconsistency which leads to a slight ambiguity. In his book titled *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba* [The Human Soul, Ego and Person], on p. 324, one can read that “The Soul, the spirit, the person would be anonymous in existence if there were no named ego.” If one accepts that the ego and the spirit are one and the same (see Bartnik, “*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 13), then the sentence seems imprecise. How should it be understood? It seems necessary to consider the fact that Czesław Bartnik created various thought concepts, in various contexts. He often used the words “soul,” “person,” “spirit” in a colloquial sense, thus referring to the tradition of human thought. Elsewhere, he created his own descriptive definitions. Comparing these thoughts without taking into account the “genre of narration” can lead to ambiguities. This appears to be the case here. The sentence from the book titled “*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii* has the nature of a descriptive definition, while the sentence from the book *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba* refers to the traditional Greek and Judeo-Christian thought.

⁷⁹ Bartnik writes extensively about the spiritual soul (the soul-spirit) in: Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 400–401. The term “spiritual soul” can also be found in works by Wojtyła (see *Osoba i czyn*, 245), who sees in it the ultimate principle of man’s integrity as a person.

⁸⁰ Bartnik, “*Osoba*” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 13.

⁸¹ One should add, however, that according to Bartnik, the “I” manifests itself on two levels; the human metaphysical ego shines through two dimensions of awareness: a) empirical awareness – the somatic and psychological “I,” which is the empirical self-identity (which is not the spiritual soul); there is also purely phenomenal awareness, which boils down to sensory and psychological pre-reflection (that is the case with animals); b) spiritual awareness – the soul, which culminates in the deep, metaphysical, supraphenomenal, absolute “I” that is ontologic in nature and does not necessarily manifest itself in an empirical or experiential manner; cf. Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 244; Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165.

⁸² Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 153–154.

⁸³ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 402.

⁸⁴ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 229. A similar interpretation of spirit can be found in the works of Romano Guardini, who claims that only the spirit defines the individuality of a person that does not exist in any other world of living beings; see Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka*, 190.

develops, transcends the current state and strives towards the ontic infinity.⁸⁵ Soul is a spiritual gift of God, which is linked with other (supracorporeal) gifts of God, such as: faculties of the soul, abilities, virtues, etc.,⁸⁶ which makes man an image of God and enables man to be like Him (cf. Gen 1:26). Theologically speaking, the spiritual soul is man's openness to Communion with the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The soul is proof of the existence of a personal God. According to Bartnik, the deep "I" is a testimony to the existence of a person with a spiritual soul at the center; it implies the existence of a soul, but also of a personal God, and dependence on the Supreme Being, as the human "I" does not create itself⁸⁷ and is an inner and subjective cry for the absolute "You" (it is proof of existence of the absolute "You").⁸⁸

The soul from the moment of conception towards the ultimate fulfillment. Man is already a person, has a body, a soul and a metaphysical "I," although the metaphysical "I" does not yet manifest itself in the empirical "I" as awareness, actions, work.⁸⁹ From the moment the zygote is formed, man has a personal structure, although he develops as a person; the formation of zygote is a spiritual embodiment of the universal creative act of God; the soul is created by the Creator in the womb of biological and psychological life (that is, not separately, but together with the entirety of nature and with the whole world), while the specific biological situation of zygote formation triggers a spiritual embodiment of the universal act of creation;⁹⁰ at the same time, he has the dimension of immortality (he could be destroyed only by God with His absolute power, but God does not wish to do so).⁹¹ Bartnik stands in opposition to the theory of annihilation (total destruction of man in a final death).⁹² The metaphysical "I" can never be separated from the soul, although it can be separated from the body, which happens at the moment of biological death. This is because the metaphysical "I" is the highest form of being.⁹³

85 Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 153.

86 Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 334.

87 Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165.

88 The metaphysical "I" is proof that man was directly created by God, albeit in the womb of the world; in the image of the Divine Persons, the Holy Trinity; see Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 230, 324.

89 Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 244–245; Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 35.

90 Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 94.

91 Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 405.

92 The concept of total annihilation was supported, among others, by Flemish theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009), which is mentioned by Antoni Nadbrzeźny (*Filozofia zbawienia*, 239).

93 Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 244; Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165; Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 43. Through the ego, a person is one in the sense of existential virginity (that is, it is not just about separateness), and is absolutely and ontically unique. In that, the person is similar to God, who is primeval; Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 154. When Bartnik writes about the human metaphysical "I," defining it as the "highest form of being," he again employs a certain ellipsis, as he clearly means the "highest form of created being." This is because the non-created being, i.e. the Absolute, the Non-Created Person, dominates ontically over the metaphysical human "I."

The soul at the moment of death. Man remains a person. The metaphysical “I” separates from the body (but not from the soul); the “spiritually egofied” soul (soul-spirit, soul-ego) remains constantly in some relation to the body, to the entirety of creation and to the Creator. It is a person who awaits creative complementation with the body and with the entirety of creation.⁹⁴ The soul stores the basis of personal identity.⁹⁵ It is the foundation of a new type of development – divinizing, towards deification (Bartnik is thus of the opinion that a person develops also after death, which means that the soul, through which a person expresses himself or herself, also develops⁹⁶). At the moment of death, the corporeal and spiritual (historical in nature) subjectivity of man disappears, and only the spiritual subjectivity remains. The person faces an eschatic task of restitution, recreation and renewal of this original unity in person (theology would add that this is done by God through His power). At that point, the body, which – using Bartnik’s terms – performed alphan functions, becomes omegal in nature, while the soul brings its alphan range to the limit (it is an original thought by Bartnik, which, as previously stated, may be seen as controversial with regard to its language). The body and the soul are not parts, but are co-relative to the human person, who is himself or herself through them and expresses himself or herself in them. The body and the spirit are signs of the mystery of the person’s existence.⁹⁷ Therefore, the “spirit” defines the entirety of man and does not separate from the “soul” after death; this is because, as mentioned earlier, Bartnik perceives the spirit and metaphysical ego as one and the same.⁹⁸

The soul is a bond with spirituality – towards holiness. Through the ego linked to the soul, the person connects with spirituality, lives it and pursues its most perfect form, eschatic subsistence and holiness (self-existence, but in God). Spiritual life takes on countless forms (e.g. there are many schools of Christian spirituality) and shapes: peace, quiet, contemplation, reflection; without a personal ego, the soul would constitute an anonymous dimension of existence.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 230.

⁹⁵ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155.

⁹⁶ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 156.

⁹⁷ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 155.

⁹⁸ Bartnik, “Osoba” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 13. It could be added that the metaphysical “I” is ontological in nature and does not have to always manifest itself in the empirical “I”; it is a corporeal and spiritual supra-synthesis into the form of a metaphysical “I” into the form of a human being fulfilled in eternity; without the metaphysical ego (metaphysical “I”), there is no person, and there is no metaphysical “I” without the body and soul; Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 42–43. It should also be added that – according to Bartnik (*Personalizm*, 165–167; “Osoba” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 22–23) – through the spiritualized ego, the person builds himself or herself as the world, as Eden, as the Church; through the ego, there is also a strange connection with morality, with choice and deed; one can therefore speak of an ethical, spiritual, sacral ego; through the ego, the person also has the capacity to change (the change can, of course, be for the worse, but it can also be positive, proper).

⁹⁹ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 167.

The soul is the way towards a new form of existence of the person. The person is “egofied,” which means that the ego, closely linked to the soul, is the foundation of his or her entire structure.¹⁰⁰ The person culminates in the spiritual ego. The person is therefore an identity, but at the same time also a dynamic development – into the world of immanence and transcendence. The person is an existential structure from the moment of conception and develops – especially towards the spiritual world, towards God.

Bartnik defines the soul through following terms, expressions:¹⁰¹

- a) “form” – the essence, the principle of human existence, which subjectivizes the “mineness” of ego (all those immaterial spheres of man about which the “I” makes a claim that they “belong to it”) – the soul is *esse ad creaturas*; the “spirit,” in turn, is an even more inner dimension of the soul – the *esse ad Deum*;
- b) “higher nature of being” or “highest form of being”¹⁰² (there is some inconsistency in the terminology used by Bartnik: “higher” is not the same as the “highest”; this inconsistency can be explained thorough the fact that he was looking for terms as he was creating his scholarly concepts, which often took the form of *ars poetica*);
- c) “individualization” – the soul is the means of individualization of man;
- d) “towards the inner world” – the soul is the basis of self-awareness (towards the infinite inner ego – here on Earth and in the life to come);
- e) “self-realization” – of creativity, of self-expression;
- f) “perfection” – the crowning achievement of Divine economy, aimed at constituting man as a person.

Through the soul, supernatural life (spiritual life) brings balance to man – between the individual nature and the social nature. It is a harmony of authorities and goals, with God becoming the center of all action,¹⁰³ and the person being fulfilled in a community of persons, by virtue of participation in the Communion of the Three Divine Persons.

4. The Soul in the “Social Person”

This section will deal with one of Bartnik’s approaches which may induce intense discussion and provoke objections. According to the author discussed in this paper, one can speak of the real existence of a “social person.” According to his view of

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 165.

¹⁰¹ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 402–406.

¹⁰² Both terms can be found in: Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 402–303.

¹⁰³ Wyszyński, *Duch pracy ludzkiej*, 123.

personalism, the “prosopic” structure (“elements of the world of a person”) helps explain all domains – space, history, existence,¹⁰⁴ and therefore also society.

In Bartnik’s personalistic system, human nature is the nature of each individual, but it is also, in a sense, social nature (a kind of generality).¹⁰⁵ A person is ontically self-existent, but at the same time also has mutual relationships with other persons and forms a society together with these persons.¹⁰⁶ For man is not only an individual. It can be said that, in a way, an individual draws from the world of the community, while a society also participates in the life of an individual.¹⁰⁷ That way, through his nature, man reaches beyond the limits of the empirical world of his person, his body or his habitat.¹⁰⁸

That is why it can be said that man is a social being – he is oriented towards communion with others, towards life in a community. A human person is a mysterious union of universality and individuality.¹⁰⁹ He or she develops when he or she is open to society, and at the same time society is created when it is entirely oriented towards individuals.¹¹⁰ For this reason, Bartnik would add that “a person is a self-existent and perfect being which manifests himself or herself as individual ego and social ego.”¹¹¹

On this basis, Bartnik claims that one should speak directly of a “social person,” a collective person (Latin *persona collectiva, communis*). A social person is an existence analogous to an individual, but should also be understood in an ontological manner, as an entity that is real in its own way (and not only as a purely mental or emotional construct). According to the creator of universalist personalism, a social person is a necessary correlate (one of two mutually dependent concepts) of an individual, who by nature is a social relationship.¹¹² He bases his argument that using the term “social person” is justified and based on the work of Stanisław Kowalczyk, who developed personalistic Thomism.¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Bartnik, *Metodologia teologiczna*, 118; Barth, “Personalizm jako fundament,” 128.

¹⁰⁵ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 157.

¹⁰⁶ Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm*, 45.

¹⁰⁷ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 157. Dialogic understanding of a person (describing the prosopic significance of the “I – You” relationship) can also be found in the thought of Romano Guardini; see Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka*, 192–194.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 157.

¹⁰⁹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 157.

¹¹⁰ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 158. According to neo-Thomism, a society is formed for the common good of the individuals comprising it; it is an ultimate basis for the uniting of potentialized human persons into free personal societies; see Krąpiec, *Ja-człowiek*, 422.

¹¹¹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 178.

¹¹² Bartnik, “Osoba,” 884; *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 332; Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 429. Rejecting the existential reality of a social person entails the risk of moving into idealism, psychologism or spiritualism; cf. Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 332.

¹¹³ See Bartnik, *Osoba i historia*, 36.

Society – according to Bartnik – has the dimension of nature and person,¹¹⁴ and therefore, within the “social person,” the following elements of the structure of a person can be discerned:¹¹⁵

- a) social nature: body and *sui generis* spiritual soul (cf. Acts 4:32);
 - somatic dimension (any basis of social existence, including economic, geographic and ecological conditions);
 - psychological dimension (collective mind: collective cognition, collective awareness and self-awareness, set of beliefs; social will: set of aspirations, choices; collective action: conduct, e.g. civilization, transfer of information; one can therefore talk about a social heart and a social brain);
 - spiritual dimension (social soul, Latin *anima communis*: a mysterious union of souls of individuals, which creates a new quality and determines the spiritual dimension of the entire society, the spiritual center of identity); although it has to be added right away that people do not have a “common soul,” nor is there any sort of “soul” of the world; these expressions are merely metaphors, otherwise there would be a threat of some kind of fusion of individuals, erasure of all differences;¹¹⁶
- b) social ego: the collective empirical “I” (awareness, mind, will, decision-making power, feelings, actions) closely linked to the deep “I” (metaphysical, which has the right to exist as a society); collective “I” (“we”); closely linked to the social soul, to the unbreakable subjectivity of the society;
- c) social existence: an individual may exist and develop only through Non-Created Persons (otherwise effect would infinitely outweigh the cause), and also through other created persons; the existence of an individual is proof of the existence of a personal society – a social person;¹¹⁷
- d) role of the society: towards the inside (Latin *ad intra* – service to all individuals; but one can also speak about the self-realization of a society – self-continuation, social development, becoming a society with a new dimension of existence and relationships) and towards the outside (Latin *ad extra* – towards other societies, in a relationship with the entire world, with the Universe, and especially with God); through this role, a social person opens the road towards universality, towards the Kingdom of Heaven.

When discussing Bartnik’s views, a question should be asked whether the thought of a “social person” is not, in reality, pure idealism, nominalism, a mere philological construct, especially given that all “internal” elements of the structure of a “social

¹¹⁴ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 427–430; Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 294, 332; Bartnik, “Osoba” w *filozofii i w teologii*, 16; Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 35, 275.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 154.

¹¹⁷ Bartnik (*Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 325) is completely right when he says that a “social person” cries for an explanation of his or her genesis, i.e. for the absolute “You,” even stronger than an individual.

person” are, to some extent, understood in an analogous manner (e.g. social ego). It is possible to agree with such objections, but at the same time it is also necessary to recognize the uniqueness of entities belonging to the category of society (e.g. nation, family, Church). Societies are not merely collections of individuals, as claimed by extreme isolationism. They are, in some way, distinct: they have their own history, identity, common goals, culture, etc. For this reason, by analogy with human rights, there are increasingly frequent mentions of the rights of nations (the right to self-determination, to independence, to their own culture, language, etc.). John Paul II spoke about this when he addressed the members of the UN General Assembly on 5 October 1995. Bartnik wrote about the prosopic vision of nations, about their rights and obligations in a monograph titled *Personalizm* [Personalism].¹¹⁸

The author discussed in this paper realized that the term “social person” requires further intellectual effort and refinement.¹¹⁹ At the same time, he believed that an individual cannot be understood excluding the “social person.” “Social person” naturally has a different meaning than an individual: it is some kind of collective life. Society, according to him, is some kind of mysterious co-humanity, co-existence, co-action, co-life, co-aspiration, some kind of collective subjectivity which has common ideas and its own passive and active dimension with respect to the world; all this encompasses good and evil as well as an extraordinary existential drive of the society, which has its own historical depth.¹²⁰ It should be added that a community, which has an empirical form, but also a spiritual one, and its “soul” is a communion of material and spiritual goods is a higher form of society.¹²¹ On this basis, one can also mention some kind of common spirituality of the community,¹²² and a “social soul,”¹²³ which serves similar functions as in an individual, determining the prosopic shape of the society¹²⁴ and becoming the principle of social existence, its higher nature, a medium for self-awareness and self-realization of the community, mission fulfillment, development and transcendence of reality towards the ultimate communal fulfillment in eternity.

¹¹⁸ See Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 202–203, where the following rights of nations are mentioned: right to “be born,” right to live in their own homeland, right to biological life, right to proper self-love, right to self-awareness, right to sovereignty, right to proportional access to earthly goods, right to full participation in the family of nations, right to free association with other nations, right to their own tradition, right to use the basic universal human ideas, right to benefit from the achievements of science, right to make contributions to the common good of the world. There is a clear reference to the “structures of the world of a person” defined by Bartnik.

¹¹⁹ Bartnik, *Ludzka dusza, jaźń i osoba*, 332.

¹²⁰ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 180–182.

¹²¹ Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 183.

¹²² A community is based on voluntariness, e.g. marriage, family, religious order; Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 185.

¹²³ Bartnik, *Misterium człowieka*, 35.

¹²⁴ Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, I, 428.

Of course, the question remains whether the term “social person” is really worth using when it is not widely accepted in the academic community, when it is controversial and requires clarification and explanations. Theology, in a way, combines philosophical language with biblical language, metaphorical language with literal language, symbolic language with realistic language, the language of science with the language of faith, traditional language with contemporary language. It is extremely difficult, but also inspiring. Bartnik’s goal was to discover a fuller meaning of reality and describe it in various ways – with a view to a person – and he was always aware that theological language is secondary to the mystery of reality.

* * *

It seems that, ultimately, Bartnik is, in some sense, an eclecticist, who wishes to remain in unity with the tradition of the Church, but at the same time tries to affirm man as a person. Reflections on the concept of “person” led him to the question of how to understand a “soul.” He wanted to preserve tradition, he recognized the body-soul complexity of man (and in this sense is a dualist), but he also emphasized that, as a person, man is one (expressed through body and soul – in this sense, he is a biblical monist). His thought also shows a predilection for the three: body, soul, spirit (wherein he equated spirit with the metaphysical “I”). The reader may therefore ask: which concept did Bartnik think was accurate? Perhaps his thought evolved? It seems that “person” is the hermeneutic key to understanding his ideas. Within the “person,” he wanted to “place” all valuable human thought – from anthropology of ancient religions, from classical and contemporary philosophy, from the Bible and from contemporary theology. At the same time – as *sui generis* synthesis and conclusion – he proposed his own (often poetic and embellished with neologisms) personalistic concepts. For many, this way of theologizing may seem less orthodox, departing from accepted notions. It seems that Bartnik did not deny them, but believed that theology should be dynamic and adjust its language to modern understandings. Since he saw the development of the term “person,” he wished not to erase, but to reinterpret the truths of faith in perhaps a newer way.

At the end, a fundamental question arises: does Czesław Stanisław Bartnik’s approach exhaust the possibilities for understanding the mystery of man and his soul? Definitely not. He himself was aware that language would certainly continue to evolve, that other terms defining the mysteries of the world of Non-Created Persons and created persons may appear. He decided to summarize the human thought to date in a traditional manner, to combine it into a coherent whole, to show its beauty, and then look in a new way, from the perspective of the person he defined descriptively, while constantly refining his thoughts. He did not want to create a simple

eclecticism, but viewed the formation of human thought as constant development, continuous discovery of the Truth.

Today, when the term “soul” may be endangered, often understood in an esoteric, reincarnative, gnostic manner, confused with the way plants and animals exist, or rejected, personalistic thought tries to remind us about the great dignity of man, received in the act of creation and in Jesus Christ.

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