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EROTICISM IN FR. FRANCISZEK SAWICKI'S PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

Love has been a constant fascination to humankind. Philosophers, wanting to more analytically capture the phenomenon of love, came up with various classifications and systematisations, creating new avenues for its interpretation (Rougemont, 1968; Kuhn, 1975; Oord, 2009; Hooks, 2001; Cruz, 2012; Schönherr-Mann, 2012, Schönberger, 2017, 15-50). Particularly rich in connection with the theme of love was the twentieth century, mainly due to the emergence of philosophical anthropology. As a distinct field of knowledge, philosophical anthropology is the result of interest in “man” understood as a whole, as opposed to the compartmentalised focus adopted more and more by the specialised sciences, which began to “lose sight of him” (Langmeyer, 2000, 23-24). The growth of a philosophy of love was enlivened by, among others, the works of Max Scheler (*Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, Bonn 1923), Dietrich von Hildebrand (*Das Wesen der Liebe*, Regensburg 1971), Erich Fromm (*The Art of Loving*, New York 1956), Simone Weil (*Institutions pré-chrétiennes*, Paris 1951), Joseph Pieper (*Lieben, hoffen, glauben*, München 1986), and Karol Wojtyła (*Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Lublin 1960). The work of Fr. Franciszek Sawicki, who was trying to contribute to the philosophy of love in a broader historical context and demonstrate its praxeological implications, is included in this movement. According to Sawicki, the category of love plays a fundamental role in determining the sense of human existence and activity in the world, manifesting in various areas of life. Love is a way to explore

not only the mystery of God, but also the human being (Babiński, 2007, 7-8; 2013a, 52; 2013b, 420).

1. TYPES OF INTERPERSONAL LOVE ACCORDING TO SAWICKI

Reflecting on love in the context of interpersonal relationships, Sawicki begins by systematising the forms of human love. He considers sexual love as the most basic; strong and passionate, sexual love intensely affects the human personality insofar as it stems from the urge to propagate the species. However, the human being – a creature that transcends the world of nature and therefore the determinisms therein – imbues his sexual activity with a higher meaning: “Human sex life and reproductive ability of people strangely dominate over all that is on the lower levels” (Sawicki, 1937a, 20). In this way man merges the sex drive with sexual love, sex with eroticism, and the world of the senses with the spiritual sphere. The desire for connection with another person translates to a love for that person. He thus raises his love to a higher level, endowing it with spiritual value (Sawicki, 1937a, 20; Sarmiento, 2002, 34). This spiritual love constitutes love’s second form. The third form of love is universal love, wherein love derives not from the desire for sex, but from the possibility of creating a unique and personal relationship between people. Thus considered, universal love is the precondition for the proper development of other forms of love. For Sawicki, the sexual aspect of love finds its complement and foundation therein (Sawicki, 1937a, 23).

Sexual love is also the foundation for the emergence of various forms of familial love, with maternal love at the forefront. Familial love, in turn, is the foundation for the development of family, homeland, and love of humankind (Sawicki, 1936a, 26-28). Among these, the latter has the largest breadth and was popularised as a central tenet in Stoic and Christian philosophical traditions (Sawicki, 1937a, 25-26). Finally, the highest level of love is God’s love (Sawicki, 1937a, 31). Ascending to God through love means experiencing the purest and most spiritual kind of love. At first glance, combining the transcendent element of God with sensual affection appears peculiar. As Sawicki points out, there is religiosity in eroticism and eroticism in religiosity (Babiński, 2011, 539-540).

The sexual act itself carries something mysterious insofar as it is a revelation of the divine element. In the ancient Greek tradition, this divine element takes the form of the deity Eros. Worshipping Eros is associated with power of the reproductive forces and regards sexual intercourse as a sacred act (reinforced by the occurrence of sacred prostitution in various religions and cultures) (Lindberg, 2012, 49). The tendency to sanctify sexuality – that is, to perceive it as a di-

vine, all-encompassing drive which resembles the utmost force of life – appears in contemporary culture (Sawicki, 1935, 25; 1937a, 34; 1937b, 80-81, Szlandak, 2005). Sawicki thinks that such pantheistic tendencies toward human passion, which derive from the natural pantheism of pagan cultures, are still present in contemporary culture (Sawicki, 1937a, 37-40). Sexual psychology, which reduces the understanding of human sexuality to the realm of drives, “push[es] down the divine element to the human or even animal level” (Sawicki, 1937a, 40). For Sawicki, to glorify the mere sexual act by considering it the utmost value in human life degrades the meaning of God and the supernatural in human life. Such a view that man is unavoidably subject to the all-powerful drive also primitivises the human being and forces the thesis that his existence is determined. This view would require one to abdicate any moral value in the interpretation of human sexuality. If this were the case, sexuality would cease to be an integral element of the development and growth of the human person, as Sawicki believes, expressing the implementation of the mission of life entrusted to us by God (Sawicki, 1936, 18; 1937a, 40; Babiński, 2011, 15; 2013b, 422-423).

Indeed, man must be aware of the task entrusted to him by the Creator, which is expressed in creating love. Love elevates the instinct to propagate the species inscribed in human nature and conditioned by biological processes, which is a manifestation of human animality. Sawicki claims that love “refines sexual intercourse, giving it a human face” (Sawicki, 1982, 27; 1937b, s. 81-82). He emphasises the beauty and goodness of human sexuality and sexual acts when they are an expression of love which creates new life – a kind of participation in the creative power of God Himself. However, he opposes attempts that idealise the sensuality of a sexual act but disavow its divine value – “It is only intoxication of the senses and flattering them” (Sawicki, 1937a, 37). In sum, sexual love should be the starting point for learning about and striving for love’s other levels.

2. “EROTIC MOMENT” IN THE RELATION OF MAN TO GOD

For its part, eroticism also permeates and forms an integral component of religiosity. This relationship is especially highlighted in certain types of mysticism. In mystic practices, the soul seeks union and spiritual communion with God. This desire is most often illustrated by the image of spiritual engagement or marriage. This type of expression of the mystical experience has its roots in the Scriptures and the centuries-old tradition of the Catholic Church (Lindberg, 2012, 138-146). However, it would be a mistake to simplify the richness of the mystical relationship by reducing it to sexual eroticism. Independent from the sensual

drives, there is an additional sphere of higher drives of the soul. The love for God “springs” from these latter drives, inspiring man to great action in the service of goodness. The eroticism inherent to descriptions of mystical experiences should therefore be understood not as literally sensual but as symbolically sensual, in other words, an attempt to convey that which is spiritual and completely inexpressible in the more literal, physical terms familiar to man (Sawicki, 1937a, 37).

Love is therefore an extraordinary force that heavily influences human life. Sawicki claims that love is a kind of natural drive, but such a definition is insufficient on its own. Every person has an innate longing for love which is expressed in two ways. This desire for love can manifest in a subjective (to love) and objective (to be loved) sense. The basis for this expression is “the elemental natural impulse of the soul” (Sawicki, 1937a, 41-43). The existential meaning of love arises from its moral and religious connotations. Love is not just a drive inscribed in human nature but something that engages the human being holistically. Moreover, love transcends the sphere of human nature insofar as it becomes inscribed into religious sanctioning in the form of a commandment of love, the utmost expression of moral awareness. In this context, the theologian asks: Is this commandment necessary, since the need for and realisation of love seems to be naturally present in man?

Trying to solve this problem, Sawicki compares human and animal life (Babiński, 2007, 16). He emphasises that animal life is guided by natural urges, whereas human existence is different. Free will is a counterweight to the drives that determine action for human beings. In human beings, it is common for drives and instincts to be ordered by will. It turns out here that love cannot be reduced to a mere drive. If it were, one would love only those to whom one is sexually attracted, adopting an attitude of indifference or even hatred toward others (Sawicki, 1937a, 53-54). Experience, however, suggests something completely different. Furthermore, in the felt experience of love, it cannot be dispelled and awakened on command. The Christian commandment, therefore, does not refer to loving affections but to will in its exhortation for internal and external benevolence: “do no evil to others, desire good and do good. A person can achieve such kindness, which does not exhaust the essence of love, but belongs to it, even if he does not feel attracted to love” (Sawicki, 1937a, 60). The commandment refers to feeling as a reason for shaping emotional life. A command of will alone cannot generate feeling. However, will can help stimulate feeling with imagination (Babiński, 2011, 541).

The content of the commandment draws attention to the imperative wording which orders one to direct acts of love toward God and man (neighbour). In this regard, Sawicki questions the possibility of realising such love. Referring to theological considerations, he states:

We should value God's love above all. Because God is the greatest good, we are obliged to be so devoted to Him that we value Him more than any other good and put Him above all others. On the other hand, theology does not demand that God's love be superior to everything in terms of intensity and power of affection. We are not entirely masters of our affection; for it is obvious that it is easier to arouse the feeling of what is close to us on earth than God, so far away from our imagination. (Sawicki, 1937a, 60)

3. LOVE AS A TASK IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

The consequence of God's love is love of one's neighbour. Such love has mainly theological and biblical motivation for Sawicki. Referring to 1 J 4:20, he focuses his attention on the specific Christian details of this commandment and discusses the love of one's enemy. Sawicki is inclined to accept the thesis that this commandment includes enemies in the sphere of universal love. However, this does not mean treating everyone equally or loving them with equal intensity. "To love everyone" does not mean to love "equally". The evaluation of individual people and loving them in the appropriate measure depends on their intrinsic value (Sawicki, 1937a, 64).

The commandment of neighbourly love – separate from its positive meaning – also has an important disciplinary purpose. It sets moral boundaries on love, ostensibly to contain it from expression in the wrong direction or overstepping the mark. The specific requirements are often difficult to implement and occasion passionate contestation and attempts at undermining them. The most important boundary concerns sexual love; in essence, love should be universal, but its sexual dimension is only permitted in a lasting, lifelong bond for purpose of procreation. In this sense, human passion, fuelled by idealistic currents proclaiming paradise on earth, attempts to justify the right to free love. However, it does not take into account moral aspects, ignoring the problems of responsibility for children and evil caused by instrumental treatment of sexuality and objectification of another human being (Sawicki, 1937a, 73).

Sawicki attempts to assess the value of love. He says that love can paradoxically be a source of both happiness and suffering. Suffering, in the form of internal disorder, results when love is directed toward base values (e.g., money, power, pleasure). Lack of reciprocity in love and unfaithfulness can also be sources of suffering (Sawicki, 1937a, 76). However, the positives of love are disproportionately larger than the negatives. The most important of these are the social activities, goals, and duties that love inspires.

Sawicki puts love first in his estimation of the entirety of moral life in the context of theological virtues. The value of moral attitude determines the same factors that are responsible for the value of the human being as a person. On the one hand, it is a matter of man's relationship to God, shaped by love and expressed in his treatment of life as service to God. On the other hand, it concerns relationships with other people as a result of the social aspect of human nature. These values are implemented in specific temporal, legal, and socio-environmental contexts. Love, in other words, is the fundamental driving force for human activity, expressed in the desire to establish dialogue and the readiness to help others.

The human person embodies an integral coexistence of physical and spiritual elements. The concurrence of these two elements places the human being on the border of two realities. Human beings therefore belong to the realm of nature while simultaneously transcending that which he has in common with the animal world. In particular, the forces of instinct – especially self-preservation and sex – intensely influence the direction and activity undertaken by man. They determine human nature and demonstrate human belonging to the realm of nature. They also have an impact on the human psyche, which manifests in its own expressive way (Sawicki, 1937a, 77-80).

4. EROTIC LOVE AS A DETERMINANT OF HUMAN LIFE

According to Sawicki, the connection between man and nature is most explicitly manifest in sexual activity, rooted in the sexual drive focused on fertility: "sexual drive – with sexual love, a sexual moment – with an erotic moment. Man wants to connect with a person because he loves her. In this way, the spiritual element is combined with the sensual/natural element. Sexual love is thus ennobled, spiritualised, cleanses the animal nature" (Sawicki, 1936, 126; 1982, 27). Sawicki emphasises that man transcends nature through love, through the spiritual element associated therewith. With human sexual activity, the sexual act is not solely for the purposes of reproduction and prolonging the existence of the species. Rather, it expresses the mutual love of the participants and creates unity on the spiritual level. This relationship has an ontic basis. The goal of human sexuality is therefore not procreation per se, but fostering interpersonal community (Adamczyk, 2007, 19-26).

Sex is thus a special expression of love, involving more than the emotional and volitional spheres. It has its foundation in the ontic structure of being, which – due to manifesting its own specific perfection, considered in terms of metaphys-

ical good – evokes pleasure. It should be noted that man enters into a very special, personal relationship with the other, which in turn breeds love: “there is a universal love between a woman and a man, which is used for loving the other not as a being of another gender, but as a human being. In this universal love, sexual love can and should be complemented” (Sawicki, 1937a, 25).

Sawicki states that human sexuality is realised in human life, in its biological aspect, in the same way as in the animal world. This is most likely the reason why sexuality and sexual acts are associated with feelings of shame and secrecy or discretion. The complexity of human nature is externalised here in particular, in “the gap between the spirit and sensuality, between the higher and lower self, between a sense of dignity and weakness in life” (Sawicki, 1982, 8). Although man is a unique being among all creatures due to the spiritual element that constitutes him, due to his natural element he nevertheless exhibits certain behaviours in common with the animal world. This commonality, according to Sawicki, is the cause of a kind of trauma or humiliation in human beings (Sawicki, 1936a, 18; 1936b, 11-12; 1982, 13). This trauma often provokes a state of anxiety, disgust, fear, or revulsion. At the same time, however, in the sexual sphere one sees something appealing, fascinating, “attractive and charming,” with an intriguing and mysterious element (Sawicki, 1982, 14). Sawicki sees the reason for this discrepancy in the competing responses of the lower (bodily) and higher (spiritual) elements of human nature. The genesis of this so-called “clashing” of physical and spiritual elements in man can be seen in the treatment of original sin (Spaemann, 2009, 231). On the one hand, one is lured to the sexual act with the promise of pleasure; on the other hand, however, one is wary of the possibility of losing one’s spiritual freedom – the domination of drives over spirit (Sawicki, 1946, 86; Babiński, 2013b, 429).

Sawicki opposes those who oversimplify and falsely interpret the Church as promoting a view that depreciates the sphere of human sexuality. He argues that, in its teachings, the Church fully accepts and affirms carnal values, sensual life, and sexual love. However, he believes that sex cannot be the main or sole component in what it means to be human. Human sexuality should be considered as one of the sources of man’s personal growth. In order to materialise in this way, this sphere of human existence ought to be examined from the viewpoint of faith. This viewpoint would guarantee its full and proper development, which takes place in connection with other spheres of human existence and activity. In order to ensure harmonious human growth and development, sensual and sensory life must be placed in its proper place. This does not absolutise or diminish its significance and value, although it is far from a Christian understanding of man.

Thus, the sexual sphere of sensuality must be subordinate to the goals and laws of spiritual life (Pawłowicz, 2011, 112). In this way, spiritual life receives the support of propulsive forces, while those impulses are elevated to the heights of spirit: “In this way the whole human, the whole human being, becomes an expression of a perfect personality” (Sawicki, 1947, 19; 1937b, 84-87).

Thus considered in the theology of Sawicki, sexual activity is by nature something good and finds full acceptance in the Christian vision of life. What is more, if it is realised in accordance with God’s plan – that is, in marriage – sex is a sacred act and has significant consequences for the development of love. Sex participates in the realisation of the Christian ideal of the human person understood individually as well as communally (marriage, family) (Sawicki, 1982, 22-23; 1937b, 81-82).

Man is called to be free. This entails that constant effort must be made to curtail the drives which, left unrestrained or unshaped, can become the main determinant of human behaviour and choices. Undertaking the challenge to reign in the sphere of sensuality is not an easy task; in Sawicki’s words, “To preserve human dignity and purity in sexual life requires a great, often heroic effort, especially under the conditions of modern civilisation, in an environment with such dangerous erotic tensions and such a limited possibility of normal satisfaction in married life” (Sawicki, 1982, 31).

The effort to introduce order into the human sexual sphere should include the natural resources available to man, namely, morality, responsibility, the exertion of asceticism, and whatever faith brings about: moral order, conscience, teaching of the Church, and an openness to what is a gift of God’s grace in an effort to improve oneself (Sawicki, 1936b, 91-100; 1937b, 83; 1982, 22-23). Man must be aware of the integrity of the sexual sphere with other “elements” that make up his existence. The senses and impulses do not constitute an autonomous sphere of existence which functions independently of the others; their realisation must take place in the context of an effort to strive for the ideal, in fulfilment of human personhood. This fulfilment is only possible when a person understands their sexual activity not merely as another manifestation of their biology, but as carrying deeper meaning. Such realisation occurs when activity in this sphere is recognised as a share in God’s creative power and an expression of the desire to build love (Sawicki, 1937a, 39). Love, according to Sawicki, elevates sex, introducing personal valuation of its subject into it.

On the other hand, reducing human sexuality to the realm of impulses leads to the objectification of man. Whoever perceives sexuality in this way will treat their partner as an object of potential use. Whereas the drive for sex makes

one look only for a suitable individual of the species, love is always directed at the fullness of another person as a given individual for their specific, unique, and personal value. The sexual act thus complements and enhances previous affiliation and the relationship of love is built on it. Only when it is based on love may sexual activity become a contributing factor in the stability of marriage and stimulate the fulfilment of its tasks. It should be understood that the realisation of sex life which is driven by love is but another way of enhancing God's life and the reality of the Church. Love, accepted and realised in religious terms, has its source in God. In a human being, God's love is combined with love for another person, especially in the closest relationship afforded: the relationship between husband and wife (Sawicki, 1937a, 50-51; 1982, 27-29).

Marital love – fruitful, fertile, and community-forming – is often compared to Christ's relationship with the Church (cf. Eph. 5) (Kunka, 2012, 99; Żywica, 2010, 261). Christ – alive in the eyes of the Church – directs love to the supernatural realm, while pointing out that it always has its fullness in God's life. According to Sawicki, such a perspective makes a man of faith treat love for another person not as an absolute good, but in relation to its continuous improvement through which he will see the way of approaching God, the One who is Love. Such an approach is possible to attain only through building ordered, selfless, responsible love that readily makes sacrifices (Sawicki, 1937b, 86-87).

CONCLUSION

Human nature – according to both philosophy and theology – has limitations and imperfections. These imperfections are especially manifest in the difficulties man experiences when attempting to control his sensuality in the sexual sphere. In light of this issue, Fr. Sawicki supports efforts to control sexual drives by transcending the body and the sensory sphere through love, also seen as a way to elevate sexual activity (common to the animal world) to the level of personal relationship as an expression of man's community with God. Moreover, Sawicki draws attention to the value and significance of the erotic dimension of human life, taking it to be an integral element of human existence understood by him as *ens amans*. He opposes competing tendencies to either reduce human love completely to the erotic element or ignore it altogether under the auspices that sex is insubstantial, shameful, or sinful. The manifestation of love in a multidimensional way is, according to Sawicki, an integral part of understanding the human person.

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SUMMARY

Father Franciszek Sawicki is considered to be one of the most important philosophers of the interwar period in Poland. The problem of love must be regarded as one of the most significant among many issues he focused on in his research. Sawicki, one of the precursors of personalistic thinking, understands the essence of love as it functions in a personal relationship. Above all, we should distinguish two areas for the realisation of love: love in relation to God and love in relation to another human being. In both instances, Sawicki emphasises the need to take into account the "erotic moment" for the sake of full and proper understanding thereof. The erotic moment elucidates love as a force that engages not only the emotional and volitional spheres, but also the categorical and existential ones. This approach enables us to appreciate the full dimension of human sexuality as it pertains to the human being and ameliorate the tendency to depreciate or idolise it.