

DARIUSZ HENRYK PATER, *Holistyczna koncepcja człowieka chorego. Teologia—medycyna—praktyka [The Holistic Concept of a Sick Man. Theology—Medicine—Practice]*, ed. UKSW, Warsaw 2017, pp. 274.

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Complementary medical interactions and the extrasomatic spheres of human life characterize the end of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Historically speaking, this is not a novelty, this dates back much earlier than our era, and the Teacher from Nazareth has given care for the body and soul an eschatological significance. The medicine and Christianity, as W. Szumowski claims, has a powerful influence on the world, which is mercy that does not leave anyone without a helping hand. What was normal in the world of medicine for centuries now appears to be an innovative action. Holism has become the attractive label for therapeutic activities, but not always in its full content. There are reductionist holistic concepts, and paradoxically, these reflect contemporary man's selection of views and beliefs, which has numerous effects on our attitudes and behaviors.

In the last two decades, the first publications have been introduced to Poland that draw attention to the holistic approach to a patient, especially in the terminal phase of cancer (e.g. a collective work issued by the Diocese of Caritas entitled *Holistyczna opieka paliatywna w zaawansowanej fazie choroby nowotworowej* [Holistic Palliative Care in the Advanced Stage of Cancer], Płock 2003).

The review of the monograph *The Holistic Concept of a Sick Person. Theology—Medicine—Practice* undertakes the difficult area of scientific research exploration with cognitive courage. The difficulty lies in the multi-aspect, multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of the research topic. The structure of the dissertation does not discourage the reader from this broad topic, because the author uses terminology that is easily understandable, even for people outside this discipline. At the same time, the author of the text moves freely within the terminological meanders of many areas, fields and disciplines.

The possibilities of modern medicine confronting the postulate of building a holistic vision of man are included in the first chapter of the monograph. The author specifies the anthropological approach to holism, pointing to complementarity in medicine: humanism, metaphysics, morality, ethics, and spirituality. Biological, genetic, economic and

utilitarian reductions are at the forefront of the contemporary challenges. A significant achievement of modern medicine, which improves the quality of life, is preventative health and mental hygiene. They strengthen promoting positive patterns of social behavior in order to reduce the occurrence of risk factors and creatively change the ways of thinking about health.

All this is most certainly affected by one's lifestyle, which determines the assessment of our health situation. The author refers to the results of the study, and it is noteworthy to state that progress in engineering and medical technology does not contribute to the increase in people's overall health and resistance. These have a significant impact on the effectiveness of corrective medicine, yet they do not raise the health-related indicators of society's well-being. A significant challenge today is to strengthen people's mental health, especially resistance to stressful situations, endurance in long-term concentration, and adequate and appropriate reactions to factors causing psychic destruction. Globalization and access to many means of communication, as the author rightly points out, lead to psychological problems, not only among adults, but increasingly among younger people and within a constantly growing group.

The author's field of interest also includes the area of the direction and purpose of scientific research in medicine and its application in curative activities, including its impact on strengthening the competencies, skills and qualifications of health care professionals. A lot of space was devoted to issues about the patient's subjectivity in medical procedures, including such aspects as volunteer activity and palliative-hospice care. Modern medicine's potential, presented in the first part of the monograph, exhausts the most current issues both from the point of view of those practicing medicine and the people using it.

Phenomena and controversial bioethical issues are undertaken in the next part of the monograph, pointing to threats to human health and life. Incurable illnesses, social and civilization diseases are in most cases the negative achievements of modern civilization. They increase due to the impact of environmental factors in proportion to environmental pollution. Among the discussed bioethical issues, the author presents a rational narration about unborn children and the elderly at the end of their lives. He quite clearly, as in a handbook, treats the issue of medical experimentation.

A wide range of health issues from the perspective of the Church's involvement in protecting a patient's health and care for them are brought up by the author in the central part of the monograph. The Gospel is the basis of Christian anthropology and Personalism in medicine. The dignity of the human person, holiness in life and freedom of conscience are the pillars upon which the Church's activity is based in the world of medicine and in helping the sick at the universal, particular and local levels. The selected ecclesial infrastructures present a very good reflection of the protective presence of the Church's teachings.

The last element of the *see—judge—act* triad, used in the reviewed book, is the chapter devoted to the author's conclusions and postulates. The author points to the need

to renew the forms of pastoral care in the health services, appreciating the already existing activities and highlighting the critical issues of modernity in relation to the sick and the world of medicine. The author's main message is to encourage us to return to the sources upon which we can and should build the present and the future of the world's service to the sick. The author seems to state that there is no need to look for patterns and models, these have been present for centuries in the activities of believing communities.

The reviewed monograph systematizes our knowledge about the axiological perspective in the world of sick people and the people who serve them. This is to be in accord with our obligations and necessities if the world of medicine wants to truly serve mankind.

Theology, along with all specializations, is one of the few fields of study that has great traditions in assisting man in various life situations, especially thanks to ecclesial structures. No institution in our culture has such great experience in supporting human development at the individual and social levels as the Catholic Church. Representatives of public and local government institutions or non-government organizations often draw on the traditional and / or current strategies developed by the Church, but they do not refer to this source of inspiration.

Thus, we are looking for models that counteract social exclusion due to health restrictions. Isn't the best solution for shaping our ethos of helping them the Good Samaritan model? This kind of thinking already accompanies Catholic associations working for the benefit of a person in need. Let us be clear about what the author did not mention, that the Catholic Church has the most experience in assisting both healthy and sick people. It has the greatest volunteer ministry in the broad sense of the word.

The publication is characterized by a high degree of originality and erudition, which is confirmed by an extensive bibliography. It is also valuable because it undertakes contemporary medical challenges, the position of the Teaching Office of the Church, the contribution of ecclesial infrastructures in appreciating the life and dignity of man according to the theory and practice of faithful communities. Undoubtedly, this could be enriched by a wider reference to empirical research in already undertaken research projects addressing this monograph's topic as described in the title.

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