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Dissertation summary: *Jan Józef Szczepański's 'Diary' as a Record of Aspiring to Fullness. Life Narrative in the Moral Space.*

The most important goal of the dissertation is to answer the question of whether ethics can be an important element of autobiographical discourse. This question is considered using the example of Jan Józef Szczepański's *Diary*. The thesis poses the following questions: Can the study of autobiographical writing by means of ethics bring something new to the study of life narrative? How can diary writing constitute the identity of the subject and bring him closer to moral sources? What role does the personal document play in the moral space? Can writing a diary (and a *Diary* by Szczepański) help achieve fullness? The dissertation considers the above questions in the context of modern identity studies (including Charles Taylor and David Parker) and genetic criticism, which appears essential to diary studies. The latter perspective makes the dissertation include a wealth of information on the manuscript of the *Diary* (which is an "everyday writing practice" – Lejeune, Rodak), as well as photographs of its selected pages. The thesis demonstrates the originality, uniqueness and multifaceted nature of this *Diary* through an analysis of the project of striving for the good life it contains.

The work consists of an introduction, four major chapters divided into smaller sections, and a conclusion. The first chapter, entitled ***Autobiographical Writing - Theories, Typologies, History, Recognitions***, is a reconstruction of the development of research on autobiographical writing made by a number of researchers over the years. At the beginning of the chapter, the most important positions on autobiographical discourse are cited, including those of Ryszard Nycz, Tomasz Burek, Edward Balcerzan, Jerzy Jarzębski, Małgorzata Czermińska, Andrzej Zieniewicz, Jerzy Smulski, Philippe Lejeune, David Parker and Paweł Rodak. The autobiographical character of Szczepański's literary works, which form the context for the interpretations of the *Diary*, also becomes important. In the following parts of the text, a typology of autobiographical writing is introduced, followed by a brief description of autobiographical genres. Also included, following Paweł Rodak, is a historical outline of a diary. The next part of the chapter presents Małgorzata Czermińska's autobiographical triangle and the three autobiographical attitudes associated with it – testimony, confession, challenge – as well as three types of diaries proposed by Rodak – private, writing and literary (Szczepański's *Diary* falls into the second category). Toward the end, the question of the importance of the diary as an everyday writing practice is answered, and the place of personal documents

(especially the diary) within genetic criticism is outlined. Finally, Rodak's classification of the three truths present in a diary (events, experience, reality) is recalled, after which it is related to Szczepański's *Diary*.

In the second chapter, titled *Ethics as a Component of Autobiographical Discourse*, further tools necessary for conducting analyses on autobiographical writing are introduced. At the centre of the discussion is the question of the importance of ethics for autobiographical research. This section deals with the trends associated with the so-called *ethical turn*, and following Liesbeth Korthals Altes, three characteristic currents of this phenomenon are distinguished. The first of these – pragmatic-rhetorical – proves to be the most useful for the analyses undertaken in the dissertation. The following discussion introduces the methodological tools for the study of Szczepański's *Diary* and the key concepts developed by Taylor for the analyses to be carried out, such as “constitutive goods”, “moral sources”, “strong and weak evaluations”, “conceptual frameworks”, “moral space”, three types of “experience of fullness”, among others. This is followed by a presentation of David Parker's method of examining autobiographical literature, taking into account his identifications of the ways in which the Good is articulated. The chapter closes with a polemic against some of the objections raised against Parker's research by Paweł Rodak.

The third chapter entitled *The Moral Subject in Jan Józef Szczepański's 'Diary'* is strictly interpretive. After introducing the most important information on contemporary research on subjectivity (following Andrzej Zawadzki and Agata Bielik-Robson), the question of subjectivity in autobiographical narratives is addressed, followed by an analysis and interpretation of the subject in Szczepański's *Diary* (corresponding to John Maxwell Coetzee's recognitions). The dangers and pitfalls lurking for the subject in narratives about the self are discussed (following John Barbour, among others). The chapter continues with an attempt to read Szczepański's *Diary* in terms of a “spiritual exercise” (following Pierre Hadot and Karina Jarzyńska). Finally – as part of a comparative analysis – Szczepański's *Diary* is juxtaposed with Wang Shimin's *Autorelation*. In this context, the female perspective – of the writer's wife, Danuta Szczepańska, is brought to the fore, shown, among other things, through the use of the tools of feminist criticism.

Finally, the fourth chapter – *Three Types of Experience of Fullness in Jan Józef Szczepański's 'Diary'* – brings a detailed interpretation of the issue signalled in the title of the dissertation. In this section, specific passages from Szczepański's *Diary*, in which the intention to record “the good life” and to face the question “how to live?” are carefully analyzed. In this

chapter, in accordance with the title announcement, the three types of experience of fullness described in the *Diary* – the experience of epiphany, the negative experience of fullness, and “the stabilized middle condition” – are extensively characterized. Detailed analyses also refer to the writer's faith and disbelief, as well as to the importance of home and family, to the spaces of the sacred and profane (Kasinka and Kraków put in the perspective of geopoetics), to work as a writer and holding important social positions (including president of the Union of Polish Writers) as well as to travel (during communism forming important spaces of freedom for the writer).

The conclusion summarizes the significance of genetic criticism for the study of Jan Józef Szczepański's *Diary*, the role of his diary in the pursuit of fullness (extremely important in the situation of a man with a strong but unfulfilled desire for faith). The novelty of combining ethics and genetic criticism for the purpose of analyzing Jan Józef Szczepański's diary is emphasized, followed by an outline of the prospect of further research on the subject.

The author is aware that the diary as a nonobvious genre, a “form without form”, an everyday writing practice, demands the use of a variety of tools to study its matter. Hence, in this dissertation, one can find approaches appropriate to genetic criticism, narrative studies, and ethics, but also studies of autobiographical literature, philosophy, feminist criticism or geopoetics. All of the above-mentioned tools make it possible to read Jan Józef Szczepański's *Diary* in a vast anthropological context.