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"Na tropach podmiotu Między filozoficznym a empirycznym ujęciem podmiotowości", Joanna Trzópek, Kraków 2013 : [recenzja]

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Joanna Trzópek, *Na tropach podmiotu  
Między filozoficznym a empirycznym  
ujęciem podmiotowości*, 386 pp.  
Kraków: Wydaw.  
Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013

The reviewed work is quite an extensive, self-contained, and interdisciplinary monograph devoted to the theme of the subject. It focuses on research into two disciplines, that is, philosophy and psychology. For this reason, the book consists of two parts. Part one is entitled “The Subject in Selected Philosophical Approaches,” and part two bears the title “The Subject in Empirical Research.” Part one consists of six chapters, while part two comprises seven. In addition, the book begins with an introduction and ends with an extensive (22 pages) summary composed of the drawn conclusions, and an outline illustrating the possibilities of the original *theory of the subject*.

In the first part there are the following chapters: (1) “At the Root of the Experience of Being the Subject; The Primeval Awareness of Self”; (2) “At the Root of the Experience of Being the Subject; Embodied Subject Being in the World”; (3) “Personal Subject”; (4) “On Subjective Determinants of Cognition and Personal World. Philosophical Subject and Science”; (5) “At the Crossroads of Philosophical Issues and Neuroscience: Psychophysical Problem, Free Will and Subjectivity”; (6) “Experimental Philosophy and Common Intuitions about Subjectivity.” The second part of the book consists of the following chapters: (1) “Neuroscience in Search of the Subject: How Do I Know That I Am the Subject?”; (2) “Neuroscience in Search of the Subject: Actions and Choices”; (3) “Neuroscience and ‘I’: From Minimal ‘I’ to Narrative ‘I’”; (4) Embodied Subject

and Science”; (5) “Daniel Wegner’s ‘Apparent Mental Control’; (6) “In the Network of Subconscious Dependencies”; (7) “Subject, Self-Regulation and Self-Determination.” The impressive bibliography includes about 420 entries.

Joanna Trzópek is an assistant professor (*doktor habilitowany*) at the Institute of Applied Psychology of the Jagiellonian University. She is therefore a psychologist, yet she undertook a demanding task of mastering difficult issues of philosophy of the subject. Her efforts proved very successful and the philosophical part of her book is an example of good and mature philosophical reasoning. The very issue of the subject is a difficult one, but the author moves freely in the areas of philosophy concerning the subject or the conscious “I,” such as the philosophy of Descartes, Kant, as well as phenomenology, existentialism, and analytic philosophy. Trzópek even makes use of the achievements of experimental philosophy, which is a relatively new philosophical discipline. The second part of her work deals with issues from the fields of neuroscience and psychology in relation to the subject, which the author specializes in, resulting in their contribution to the discipline.

The book has three basic themes, or goals. The first one aims to reconstruct and discuss approaches to the subject in philosophy in parallel with the empirical sciences (p. 15). Actually, the author indirectly refers to the nineteenth-century dispute between psychologism and philosophy (Frege, Husserl). This dispute, though apparently resolved at the time, did not result in the correct solution to the problem. The modern dispute between naturalism and anti-naturalism is an emanation of this issue, although at present supposedly (according to the author) both sides are not as sharply opposed as it was seen in the second half of the twentieth century. The second topic concerns the possible complete description of the subject and a full presentation of its unique nature in relation to all other real (actual) or abstract objects. The third objective is perhaps the most interesting and most important, because it concerns the question of whether a naturalistically described subject corresponds to a real (actual) subject at all, as naturalism (see the second goal) currently seems to be dominant in some circles.

The title of the book—which mentions traces of the subject—signifies the fact that we cannot directly examine the subject as such, but only infer on the basis of the “traces” it leaves (which is a very nice metaphor, and apparently coined by the author), in attempts to reconstruct the subject. The work employs a fundamental distinction—thus indicating one of the most important philosophical problems—between the transcendental subject, the personal subject and the empirical subject. It describes the very complicated relationships and mutual penetrations of the aforementioned types of subjects. The development of cognitive science results in a constant increase in knowledge—also philosophical one—of the human mind, and therefore, of the subject as well. This results in the possibly incomplete nature of the reviewed book, as one would expect breakthrough results of empirical research on this issue—a fact which

the author is indeed aware of. However, it seems that the methodological reflections included in the book are of universal value.

Joanna Trzópek debunks a certain superstition, popular among some philosophers in Poland, that extreme naturalism is a currently accepted view within the cognitive sciences. According to the author it does not correspond with the facts. The book ends with statements answering the question of how to naturalize the subject. They indicate the following issues that need to be solved: naturalistic reduction is not necessarily good; the problem of inclusion of *meaning (intentionality)* into considerations regarding the subject; the problem of *over-interpretation* of the research results in neuroscience and related sciences; whether the subject (consciousness) is an epiphenomenon or not; the fact that from the point of view of empirical research one cannot distinguish between incompatibilists and compatibilists.

My general opinion about the book is very positive due to its formal and substantial value. I sincerely encourage all readers interested in *the subject* to study it. Also readers interested in the methodology of cognitive science as well as philosophy based on the results of the empirical sciences will find this monograph a rewarding read.

*Adam Olszewski*