



Karol Jasiński, *Relacja między religią  
i sferą publiczną w filozofii społecznej  
i politycznej Charlesa Taylora,*  
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Religion proved to be one of the most powerful forces that have ever dominated the human history, although often paradoxically. Religion has unified tribes and races into nations, but it has also broken that integrity. Religion has built and destroyed empires. Religion has started wars, but it could also compel to peace. Religion has given birth to rich cultures and has built a spiritual barrier against the totalitarian claims of matter. It has aroused dramatic struggle in souls, but it has been a source of peace and restlessness, too. Religion has made a poor man happy. Religion has also shown the hedonists that they are the paupers. Religion has enriched the poverty of the humble and it has revealed the poverty in the hearts of the rich. And whenever any nation exterminated the religious spirit, it felled, at the same time, the roots of its own culture and life. And for these reasons, the study of the relationship between religion and the public sphere is highly topical.

The author of this work has set two main objectives: the first is to present Charles Taylor's concept of society and religion, the second is to highlight the need for presence of religion in the public sphere in relation to Taylor's concept of mankind. In view of the above objectives, three main hypotheses are posed, with the appropriate arguments brought up to support them. First, Taylor distances himself from the liberal model of society and leans toward republican solutions. Second, the Canadian philosopher shows the development of religion into individualized forms of religion, but also underlines the significance of

traditional religious ties based on rituals and practices. Third, the presence of religion in the public sphere seems to be, in Taylor's writings, related to specific qualities of the human being, who is an active participant of this sphere. The above theses were, therefore, the reference points for the various chapters in this work.

Karol Jasiński draws attention to the controversy between Charles Taylor and William James. In Taylor's approach to the issue of religion, one should emphasize the need for cultural conditioning of the concept of "transcendence" and apophatism in the description of God. Taylor develops his own concept of religion in a polemic with William James, according to whom religion has its source in the feelings and experience of the individual. The Canadian philosopher criticizes this individual dimension of religion, and the individualism, emotivism, and expressivism associated with it, and emphasizes its community dimension—religion is in fact a way of experiencing ties of community. The significance of the religious community is high, because certain individual experiences, including religious ones, become more intensive when shared with other people. At the same time, it is very important that every person, however, must independently find and articulate a certain spiritual horizon.

Charles Taylor tried to provide a deeper philosophical explanation of why groups within Western societies were increasingly making claims for public acknowledgment of their particular identities. In Taylor's opinion we can search for sources of identity in naturalism, expressionism, and theism. Taylor seems to suggest that humans necessarily have some orientation toward what he calls "transcendence"—some yearning for meaning that goes above and beyond the merely human. He emphasizes the existence of God as an essential spiritual horizon and foundation of good. Some people recognize God because He is the best principle explaining their lives and beliefs. God should, therefore, be restored to the process of shaping personal identity because He is currently a "dormant" but still living source. In Taylor's opinion, religion, especially Christianity, thus serves an important role in defining the identity and giving sense to the life of not only people but also society. It provides for a solid spiritual horizon. Taylor thus encourages the exploration of its potential, the private and public spheres, as has been done for centuries.

This work is very much needed. It engages in the most important debates of contemporary political philosophy and makes a valuable contribution to the study of Charles Taylor's thought and to the analysis of the public sphere and the place of religion in it. It is written in clear language, with a deeply humanistic take on and concern for the quality of the public sphere. Taylor's social philosophy has been thoroughly analyzed, set in the context of contemporary social theory and shown as one of the leading philosophical concepts of the public sphere. The author revealed himself as an accomplished researcher of the Canadian philosopher's thoughts and a competent researcher in the field of

political philosophy. He tries to combine philosophical analysis with in-depth sociological hermeneutics, which is especially valuable considering the fact that the present day needs more and more solid foundations for its existence. The broadness of his horizons and his erudition should be appreciated.

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