



Mariusz Henryk Sztaba,
*Etyczno-moralne postawy życia społecznego
w świetle nauczania Karola Wojtyły—
św. Jana Pawła II. Wybrane aspekty,*
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John Paul II is a mystery to many of his contemporaries, who have received their intellectual formation from the Western liberal tradition. On the one hand, he is an ardent supporter of the religious, political, and economic freedoms championed by liberal democracies, and a vigorous opponent of communism and socialism. On the other hand, many liberals see John Paul as a reactionary figure. There are many differences, including contrasting assessments of current forms of capitalism and of economic globalization, as well as differing views concerning economic democracy, economic rights, consumerism, the significance of structural injustice as a cause of poverty, the proper economic role of the state, the importance of lifestyle simplification, and the urgency of ecological issues. Nowhere is this perceived tension more evident than in regard to his treatment of biomedical questions and related human life issues. George Weigel took hold of the position of John Paul II well, when he recalled his performance at the Second Vatican Council. Archbishop Wojtyła, as one of the proponents of a new *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, spoke in the first days of the debate, sharpening the point he had made in the third session of Vatican II on the relationship between freedom and truth. It was not sufficient, he argued, to say simply, “I am free.” Rather, it is necessary to say “I am responsible.”

Responsibility is the necessary culmination and fulfillment of freedom in Wojtyła's philosophical point of view. His conviction about the essential relationship between freedom and responsibility was emphasized, among other his papers, in his treatise *Love and Responsibility*. Anyone who wants to comment on the ethical reflection of Karol Wojtyła must take into account his emphasis on responsibility.

The treatise *Etyczno-moralne podstawy życia społecznego w świetle nauczania Karola Wojtyły – św. Jana Pawła II. Wybrane aspekty* [Ethical and Moral Principles of Social Life in the Light of the Teachings of Karol Wojtyła—St. John Paul II. Selected Aspects] is divided into three parts. 1. *Realistyczne i integralne doświadczenie etyczne u podstaw doświadczenia osoby oraz wspólnoty*. [A Realistic and Integral Ethical Experience Underpinning the Experience of the Person and the Community]. 2. *Prymat moralności w życiu społecznym* [The Primacy of Morality in Social Life] 3. *Wychowanie moralne w służbie autentycznego życia społecznego* [Moral Education at the Service of Authentic Social Life]. The treatise is an attempt to systematize the main foundations of social life in an ethical and moral framework, drawn not only from the pastoral experience of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła-John Paul II, but also from scientific reflection.

The author of this peer-reviewed study, Mariusz Sztaba does it in a multifaceted and, at the same time, insightful and orderly, as well as logical and comprehensive manner, which undoubtedly reflects his competence. A valuable asset of the book is its catechetical dimension, the aspect of conscience formation, showing educational ideals, personal models and authorities, as well as interpersonal and social relations. The presented work is theoretical. It is part of the problems constituting the research area of social sciences and humanities.

The underlying principles that provide coherence to John Paul's thought on democracy and morality can be found in his particular synthesis of phenomenology, philosophical personalism, and Thomistic ethics, especially his "law of the gift," which stresses that human subjectivity is fundamentally relational. Wojtyła's philosophical research oscillates around the human conception of the person he presented in the work *The Acting Person*. Based on Boethius, St. Thomas Aquinas and phenomenological philosophy, Wojtyła described a person as having self-awareness and freedom of choice. He distinguishes two-sided human dynamism: active and passive. Passive human dynamism describes somatic and physiological processes and is at the level of the biological nature of a person who at most registers that something is happening to him/her. Active human dynamism is associated with a person as an actor. Due to the reflexive nature of consciousness, one experiences his/her deed and himself/herself as the originator of acting. Through consciousness, he or she experiences the morality of his/her acts. Consciousness comes before, during, and after the act. The act

leaves its trace in consciousness. After performing the act, the consciousness still reflects it—one is then conscious of his/her actions in the next act—but it no longer accompanies him/her.

The aim of the study was to present a philosophical and theological analysis of the moral foundations of social life with regard to dialogue as an important and fundamental contribution to the solution of serious social problems. The problem of man in the context of social life, with all its richness and multifaceted nature, makes one experience the specific requirements related to research of person more and more. With this specific research requirements of the author, the study presents not only multidisciplinary but also interdisciplinary issues of the human person and its functioning in various areas of social life.

Being respectful of man as a person creates a precondition for peace between people and between nations and which can lead to eradication or at least alleviation of certain social conflicts. The requirement of education is a moral challenge for all to work with those who are disadvantaged in any way. Education as an expression of belonging is not only aid, but also responsibility for the whole, for the community, for the world, for the Earth. We feel that responsible education can benefit the development of all those involved.

The study as a whole is an interesting material. The content of the study was written at a very high level. The author presents a wide spectrum of issues concerning the ethical and moral foundations of social life in the light of the teaching of Karol Wojtyła-John Paul II in an original way.

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