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## SOCIAL ETHICS IN THE YOUNG KAROL WOJTYLA: A STUDY-IN-PROGRESS

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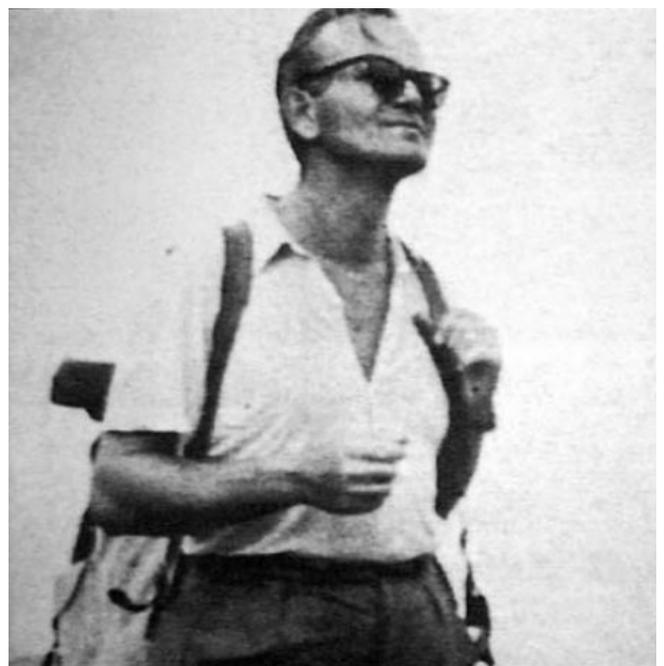
### INTRODUCTION



KAROL WOJTYLA BEGAN HIS ACADEMIC CAREER IN THE LATE 1940S WHEN, SHORTLY after his November 1946 ordination, he went to pursue graduate studies at the Angelicum. Wojtyla defended his doctoral dissertation, on faith according to St. John of the Cross, in Rome 19 June 1948. On the basis of the “exemplary” vote of his Angelicum doctoral board, the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University conferred the doctorate in theology 16 December 1948. Wojtyla then began to work on his habilitation, “an attempt to develop Christian ethics according to Max Scheler’s system,” which was first presented to the Jagiellonian in December 1953. Conferral of the title “docent,” which would normally come from the habilitation, was impeded as a result of Communist manipulation of the higher educational system, and soon thereafter the Faculty of Theology at the Jagiellonian was completely suppressed. By 1954-55 Wojtyla began his association with Catholic University of Lublin, an affiliation that would continue until Wojtyla’s election to the papacy in 1978.

While Wojtyla’s activities as a scholar in Lublin are somewhat known in the West, it is less well-known that in the 1950s Wojtyla was also teaching in Krakow. In October 1953, Wojtyla began lecturing two hours weekly at the Jagiellonian on social ethics for fourth and fifth year students.<sup>1</sup> Following the suppression of the Jagiellonian’s Theology Faculty, lectures were independently organized for students from the Krakow, Czestochowa, and Silesian seminaries. Apparently starting in October 1954, Wojtyla continued his social ethics teaching in this program, two hours weekly, a pattern which continued throughout the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> By 1958, Wojtyla’s lecture script had already been reproduced.<sup>3</sup>

To date Wojtyla’s lecture notes have not been officially published. They remain in typescript, with some copies held by the Pope John Paul II Institute of the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). Professor Jerzy Galkowski, under whom this author served as a Kosciuszko Foundation Fellow in 1992-93, supplied a copy of that typescript to this author, on which the following lecture is based. The present author is working with a view



towards eventual translation and publication of the text, most likely by the Pope John Paul II Institute of KUL. One step in this process, a trip to KUL to gather bibliographical citations to complete Wojtyla's references (Wojtyla is notorious about not providing footnotes) took place in June 1994 with support from a short-term Travel Grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Washington, DC. The current challenge is now primarily the translation itself (and the challenge of the time required for that undertaking).

## OVERVIEW

Wojtyla's typescript consists of two folders: a 278-page text entitled "Catholic Social Ethics-General" and a 233-page text entitled "Catholic Social Ethics-Particular." In structure and style Wojtyla clearly follows (sometimes even verbatim) the two volume work *Catholic Social Ethics* by Father Jan Piwowarczyk.<sup>4</sup> Piwowarczyk (1889-1959) was a twentieth century Polish Catholic social ethicist with a significant role in then-contemporary Polish Catholic circles. In many ways his path crosses (more accurately, precedes) Wojtyla's. He studied at the Wadowice Gymnasium. From 1922 onwards he was a Catholic social activist and lectured (1928-33) on Catholic social ethics at the Jagiellonian. Political factors interrupted his tenure there, but he returned to that work in 1945-51. Piwowarczyk also worked in the Krakow Seminary at the time Wojtyla was studying for the priesthood. He was one of the founders of the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and served at St. Florian's Parish in Krakow, where after 1949 Wojtyla was a vicar. What follows is a synopsis of the general contents of Wojtyla's lectures concluding with some comments.

## PART I. GENERAL SOCIAL ETHICS

Wojtyla's general introduction to social ethics is divided into five chapters, each broken down into at least two (usually more) "theses." The theses, in turn, treat individual issues in social ethics. The general thrust of part I is primarily matters of general social and political (as opposed to economic) ethics.

Chapter one, on "Fundamental Premises of Catholic Social Ethics," treats foundational issues in the discipline. In this chapter Wojtyla looks at social ethics as an aspect of Christian ethics, studying it "as a theological science of normative character."<sup>5</sup> Although Wojtyla treats social ethics as a branch of theology he is also in-

tent on grounding it in reason as well as revelation. Thus, alongside a discussion of "divine revelation as the source of Catholic social ethics" Wojtyla argues for the role of natural law in social ethics, particularly as regards natural law's universality and immutability. He sums up his first chapter by defending the thesis that the "primary task of Catholic social ethics is the introduction of the principles of justice and love into social life."

Chapter two, on "The Question of the Common Good," begins with the question of the relationship between the common good and the good of individual persons. How these goods are interrelated is a key question of social ethics. Wojtyla first sets out the general requirement such a relationship must meet: "The common good ...is higher and subordinates to itself particular individual goods ...in such a way that the genuine good of the person... never experiences essential damage on account of that subordination (typescript, pt I, pp. 50-51). Wojtyla sees this relationship through the eyes of "Catholic personalism" and "Catholic solidarism," neither of which is separable from the other (p. 55). This understanding of the relationship between the good of the individual and the common good obviously has implications for the nature of society as well as issues of religious freedom, questions Wojtyla explores.

In light of these general considerations Wojtyla then considers two major paradigms for the relationship individual good/common good: "individualism" and "totalism." Both are found wanting. Individualism destroys human social nature: "[I]ndividuals exist only for themselves, [while] society exists for the individual" (p.64). Hobbes and Rousseau are singled out as its prime intellectual architects. Individualism leads to liberalism in social and economic matters, the former culminating in ethical subjectivism and utilitarianism, the latter reflected in the classical capitalism of Smith, Ricardo, J.S. Mill, and Malthus. "Totalism" on the other hand destroys human individuality, erring by assuming that "because society precedes the individual, the person, in the temporal order, being prior to him it is therefore above him ...(p. 72, emphasis added). Representatives of totalism whom Wojtyla singles out include Ottmar Spann, Italian and German Fascism, Machiavelli, the "L'Action française" movement, and Zygmunt Balicki in Poland.

Wojtyla goes on to discuss the structure of states and how sovereign states ought to relate to each other. He then studies the relation of the individual to the com-

mon good in the economic sphere, starting with the fundamental changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution. This, of course, leads into the class question. Wojtyla first sketches out the problem historically (with due attention to the Marxist emphasis on class) and then analyzes the whole question in the light of Catholic social ethics. This obviously leads to an extended critique of Marxist presuppositions (and remember that Wojtyla began his lecturing at the height of ascendancy of Stalinist elements in the Polish Communist Party). Indeed discussions of class struggle, historical materialism, atheism, and revolution make up the bulk of the chapter. The question of class struggle is contrasted against the Christian Commandment of Love, and corporatism is held out as one solution to the ethical problem.

Chapter three, “Ethical Issues of the Family and Nation,” primarily focuses on the nation although devoting the first section of the chapter to the family as the basic unit of society. Reviewing the nature of the family against various anthropological theories of its origins (i.e., Bachofen, Moran), Wojtyla’s analysis seems very pertinent to debates about family policy in the United States today. Wojtyla then moves on to consider socio-ethical issues bound up with the larger community: nation, people, fatherland, race, state. One sees in this arrangement of material and this variety of headings under which the social reality is studied a trace of Wojtyla’s Polish experience. Poland had, after all, preserved its national (i.e., popular) identity while bereft of a State for 123 years (1795-1918). Indeed, Poles had learned how to survive as a people without a state, and one sees these careful distinctions in Wojtyla. He distinguishes, for example, between the right of a people to their identity versus their right to independent statehood, a nuance found also in Pope John Paul II’s 1995 Address to the United Nations’ General Assembly, where the Pontiff stopped sort of endorsing an unrestricted right to sovereign self-determination in the form of independent states.

In chapter four Wojtyla specifically explores issues related to the State. Rejecting both individualistic and totalitarian notions, Wojtyla seeks to defend a “Catholic concept of the State,” limited and serving the genuine good of persons in that State. This allows Wojtyla to pursue questions relating to the positive duties of States vis a vis their citizens in the fields of employment, economics, and culture. It also allows for a more extended discussion of the nature of sovereignty and authority in the State, with Wojtyla lending particular attention to Catholic

theories of State power as mediately deriving from God. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship of Church and State, examining such arrangements as Caesaropapism and theocracy while defending a rather traditional model of Church-State “cooperation.” Wojtyla notes that contemporary life “differentiates politico-technical matters from politicoethical matters” (p. 255) and defends the Church’s competence to address the latter. Nevertheless, one sees here a certain immaturity in Wojtyla’s thought: it does not adequately grapple with the phenomenon of the ideologically-motivated State, the State which advances a certain *Weltanschauung*. Wojtyla approvingly quotes Jacques Maritain that a “Catholic culture” is “theocentric, spiritual, personalist, and in solidarity” (p. 256) but, given the intellectual nihilism marking much of contemporary culture, Wojtyla’s treatment is far too brief to grapple with the contemporary realities in this field.



Wojtyla closes out Part I of his lectures with a chapter on “Major Questions of International Ethical Life.” In this section he treats the question of the fundamental unity of humanity, the notion of international law, international organizations, the question of war and just war theory. Writing about the United Nations, Wojtyla singles out the following three “ethical premises” relevant to that international organization: (1) it should seek the common human good; (2) it should be set up so as effectively to guarantee international peace and security without trampling upon legitimate national sovereignty; and (3) it should promote disarmament and demilitarization through “strict control. . .in all countries” of arms production, military budgets, and propaganda (pp. 267-68).

## PART II. PARTICULAR SOCIAL ETHICS

Part II of Wojtyla’s lectures in social ethics is collectively called “Particular Social Ethics.” Divided into six chapters and subdivided into “theses” it is wholly a treatment of economic ethics, approaching the subject largely from a traditional 1950s Catholic social ethics standpoint.

Chapter one, which is untitled, introduces the entire question of economic ethics. In it Wojtyla argues

that although “economics possesses a certain autonomy in relation to ethics, it must nevertheless be subordinate to [ethics]” (pt 2, p. 1). This subordination of economics to ethics is grounded in the “supernatural end of human life” (p. I) and remains a central principle in Catholic (and John Paul II’s) social thought: many years later it will lead Pope John Paul II to his personalistic understanding of work and human creativity.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Wojtyła insists that in matters economic the Church’s authority is “mediate.”

Subsequent chapters take up particular issues in economic ethics, starting with the usual triad of property, labor, and capital. Chapter two examines the question of property, defending the right to private property on traditional Catholic grounds while take note of other theories on the origin of private property (e.g., “legalistic” theories of Montesquieu, “contractual” theories of Grotius, and evolutionary theories). The lion’s share of attention, however, goes to communist theories of property. Wojtyła’s central critique of communist property theory is that it fails to take account of the human person as he is: “Communism.. .requires higher ethical standards from people” (p. 31) than fallen man is capable of. A communist approach to material goods like that of the primitive Jerusalem community may be attainable, says Wojtyła, by sanctifying grace, but “[p]urely material, natural, and legal-administrative means are inadequate to creating that level of morality which is necessary to the realization of communism” (p. 33). Having disposed of communism, Wojtyła turns his attention instead to the principle of legitimate use, examining theories of ownership in its light. He concludes with a discussion of the necessity of reforming economic systems so that their theories of property and ownership take better account of the various complementary ethical obligations which devolve upon the owner and user of property.

Chapter three examines “Ethical Questions Related to Production.” Production involves the proper interrelationship of nature as source of resources with the human contributions of work and capital. In this chapter, Wojtyła remains within traditional social ethical categories on the relation between capital and labor, still far from Pope John Paul II’s explicit maxim of the priority of labor over capital found in his 1981 encyclical *Laborem exercens*. In his lectures Wojtyła continues with a presentation of Catholic approaches to labor (including the duty and dignity of work, contracts, salaries, labor actions, strikes, and industrialization). Wojtyła concludes

the chapter, however, with a harsh critique of classical capitalism, a system with which the Church finds itself in “decided opposition” both as a “socioeconomic way of life” and as a “general system of values” (p. v). Chapter four treats ethical issues tied up with “exchange.”

While defending exchange and free markets, Wojtyła also recognizes the need for some measure of control. More sophisticated methods of exchange, including “natural and artificial speculation” and stock markets are also studied. “Just price” is also analyzed and Wojtyła (like Piwowarczyk before him) relies heavily on the Austrian Jesuit Johannes Messner in this regard. Finally, issues related to money, including questions of paper versus metallic money, monetary value, credit and creditlending institutions, and the dangers of plutocracy are also treated.

Chapter five, on “Ethical Questions Connected with the Division of Social Goods,” focuses primarily on distributive justice. The first two theses deal with the question of just wages, a defense of the “family wage,” and a critique of liberal (i.e., *laissez-faire*) approaches to wages. The chapter also deals with the question of profit, defending “moderate profit,” i.e., “profit earned by an industrialist which avoids all unethical methods of artificially enlarging one’s profits through social exploitation and which does [not] avoid one’s duties towards the industry’s works and the whole of society..” (p. 178). Wojtyła then examines other methods of earning profits other than through work, specifically concentrating on the issue of interest and usury.

Chapter six treats “Ethical Questions Connected with the Consumption of Social Goods.” He discusses the question of family welfare, the economic state of life appropriate to a family in a just society. He speaks of society’s duty to raise its members out of poverty and assist them towards acquiring prosperity. In this connection, and probably in light of his Polish experience, Wojtyła also addresses immigration, speaking of it as a “necessary evil.” The chapter concludes with a discussion of social and ecclesial responsibility and attitudes towards the impoverished, with a brief treatment in that context of the virtue of mercy. The final part of the chapter defends the relationship between the prosperity of society and families, vigorously attacking Malthusian and Malthusian-inspired population control theories, all developed in the name of enhancing prosperity.

Wojtyła's social ethics lectures from the 1950s are not particularly novel. Indeed, at times Wojtyła simply uses Piwowarczyk to make his points. His ethical analysis is not especially different from other traditional courses in Catholic social ethics one would have encountered in that period. What, when, is the value of these lectures? In my judgment, there are several:

**Sources.** Wojtyła's lectures clearly drew up the social ethical thought of Jan Piwowarczyk. This should surprise no one. Piwowarczyk was already a distinguished Catholic social ethicist in Krakow when Wojtyła was still a junior faculty member. Between Krakow and Lublin, teaching and pastoral responsibilities, the young Wojtyła was carrying a "course overload" that would cause other faculty to rebel. He was in the process of writing his own habilitation thesis, and his own interests lay elsewhere, in foundational ethics. Social ethics seems, in some sense, to have been the "required course," and Wojtyła dutifully derived his lectures from the leader in the local field.

This is not to say that the local field was provincial. Catholic social thought in what is now Poland had a long tradition, dating back to the late 19th century. Catholic social thought had prospered in Catholic Austria and in Catholic areas of Germany. One was a partitioning power, and the other in large part dominated the Polish cultural sphere. During the inter war period (1918-39) Catholic social ethics matured in Poland, with figures like Czesław Strzemiński at the Catholic University of Lublin writing monumental works in the field and a young priest named Stefan Wyszyński capturing much attention for his writings. By cutting his own teeth on the social ethics of Piwowarczyk, Wojtyła connected himself with a large part of the classical Catholic social thought of his day. We can thus identify some of the sources from which

Wojtyła's approach to social ethics draws.

**Development.** Wojtyła's 1950s social ethics lectures are the most extended treatment we have from Wojtyła concerning social ethics in his pre-papal period. Theoretical Catholic social ethics never became a primary focus of his scholarship. Nevertheless, when we read Wojtyła's 1950s social ethics lectures against Pope John Paul II's *Laborem exercens* or *Centesimus annus* one is struck by how much Wojtyła's thought has developed. At the same time, a study of these social ethics lectures against the main themes in Wojtyła's pre-papal writings (philosophical anthropology and ethics) allows one to surmise how Wojtyła begins to draw out the implications of his love-centered personalism as they apply to Catholic social ethics. *Laborem exercens* and *Centesimus annus* may be a long way from the Cracovian classroom where Wojtyła first taught social ethics, but a knowledge of John Paul II's pre-papal corpus allows one to discern or at least predicate lines of continuity based on the unity of thought of this thinker.

The present author is interested in completing a translation, with some annotation, of the manuscripts for publication. Some discussion has already begun with the Pope John Paul II Center of the Catholic University of Lublin and the Center for the Documentation of the Pontificate of John Paul II in Rome as to eventual publication plans. The present translator, however, is an academic administrator, and frankly cannot now foresee completion of this task in less than three to four years. Obviously, the availability of this text in a Western language would be a useful resource for stimulating further study into the antecedents of John Paul's thought. This paper has assumed a more humble task: cataloging the vast range of material in those pages and making scholars aware of its existence. In that task it has hopefully succeeded.

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## NOTES

1 Adam Boniecki, ed., *Kalendarium życia Karola Wojtyły* (Krakow: Znak, 1983), p. 122.

2 Ibid., pp. 132, 138, 143, 147.

3 Ibid., pp. 166-67.

4 Jan Piwowarczyk, *Katolicka etyka społeczna*. (London: Veritas, vol. 1, 1960, vol. 2, 1963). The Veritas publishers state that the text derives from a typescript of Piwowarczyk's lecture notes.

5 All translations in the text are from the typescript and made by the present author.

6 We see glimpses of this personalistic focus even as regards work already in the 1960s. See Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), pp. 26, 29-30. The personalistic dimension of workers' rights was also being pastorally driven home to Wojtyła at the same time: the 1960s was the era of efforts to build churches forbidden by the government; most preeminently signified in the struggle, personally shared by then Krakow Archbishop Wojtyła, to build a workers' church in the steel mill town of Nowa Huta.