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THE PRINCIPLE OF SOCIAL GOVERNANCE IN THE VIEW OF JOHN PAUL II

Summary. One of the most serious attempts to answer the question about the future shape of the socio-economic order after 1989 is the social teaching of John Paul II. According to the Pope, the fundament of every economical system should be the personal principium, according to which "the basic virtue of work is the human himself". In the light of this criterion John Paul II brings about the assessment of capitalism and communism. This article is an attempt of presentation the evaluation and the main elements of Pope's positive vision of socio-economic order.

Keywords: human dignity, labor, communism, capitalism, economic liberalism, free markets, property rights, private property, means of production, democracy, consumerism, international solidarity.

PRINCIPIUM ŁADU SPOŁECZNEGO W MYŚLI JANA PAWŁA II

Streszczenie. Jedną z najbardziej poważnych prób odpowiedzi na pytanie o przyszły kształt porządku społeczno-gospodarczego po 1989 r. jest społeczne nauczanie Jana Pawła II. Według Papieża, fundamentem wszelkiego systemu ekonomicznego jest principium personalne, zgodnie z którym „podstawową wartością pracy jest sam człowiek”. W świetle tego kryterium Jan Paweł II przeprowadza ocenę kapitalizmu i komunizmu. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą prezentacji tej oceny oraz głównych elementów papieskiej pozytywnej wizji ładu społeczno-gospodarczego.

Słowa kluczowe: godność człowieka, praca, komunizm, kapitalizm, liberalizm gospodarczy, wolny rynek, prawo własności, własność prywatna, środki produkcji, demokracja, konsumpcjonizm, solidarność międzynarodowa.

1. Work and human dignity

In 1989 many of the countries included in the so-called Eastern bloc, regained the ability to self-determination and faced a historic opportunity to shape the way of its development. This situation raised many questions and discussions, the subject of which was the future shape of the social order - economic development in each of these countries. Is the capitalist system encouraged by liberalism the only alternative to the discredited collectivist communism and the Marxist ideology from which it developed? And if so, to what issue? In the light of what criteria should certain models of socio - economic be evaluated? Similar questions were also posed in regard to the countries that have relatively recently threw off the yoke of colonialism and sought appropriate paths of development. The vision of governance encompassed in the social - economic, social encyclicals of John Paul II, is one of the major comprehensive attempts to answer these questions.

All the writings of John Paul II are permeated by his distinct anthropocentrism: man is "the most important point of the visible world" (RH 8). We must immediately add that in the papal view this anthropocentrism is embedded in a broader context, in the even more basic "theocentrism". Man indeed is the central point of creation, but not so much "in itself", is in the mystery of the divine economy of creation and redemption. Both the "genealogy of the human person", as well as determining the importance of work in human life, entwine in the original biblical texts that speak of the creation of man. To these words in the first place the Pope refers to, outlining the basics of anthropology in the context of its social doctrine. The description of the creation of man: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female* (Gen 1:27), and the command that God gave to the first humans: *Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and conquer it subdues* (Gen 1:28), indirectly indicate work and show its very essence. Man bears in himself the "image of God" also in that he becomes like Him through his action regarding the earth, through which he makes the earth subdued to himself. In this way, he reflects in himself and extends the creative action of God (LE 4). Work therefore is not an option for a human which depending on his willingness he may realize or not. It is a call addressed to him, which finds its counterpart in the very essence of his humanity. That call never ceases to be valid. The process of work is an universal process. It includes all times and all people, as well as "an incalculable number of ways"(LE 4).

John Paul II sees and values "the objective" aspect of work. It enfolds a type of "material" of the work, such as all natural resources, as well as any tools, including the most modern technologies and finished fruits of labor (LE 5). However, " the sources of the dignity of work are to be sought in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one"¹. The value of work is

¹ LE 6. The human nature of work is also emphasized in CA 6 , referring to Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* . In this study the following abbreviations of encyclical titles of Pope John Paul II are used: RH - *Redemptor hominis*, LE - *Laborem Exercens*, SRS - *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, CA - *Centesimus Annus*. Apart from this, the following abbreviations are introduced: PiT - Pope John Paul II, *Pamięć i tożsamość*, *Znak*, Kraków 2005; PE - ed. J. Brodniewicz, *Przewodnik po encyklikach*, W drodze, Poznań 2003.

determined also by the fact that the results of this work are to serve man – that "in fact, in final analysis it is always man who is the purpose of work " (LE 6)

Throughout history, in the process of “subduing the earth” by man, besides labor, **capital** - ” this gigantic and powerful instrument – the whole collection of means of production” (LE 12)² - plays a more and more important role. John Paul II insists that it is not a autonomous “instrument”, because all means of production are the fruit of human labor. The subject of work always is and will remain only man. Hence the principle of the primacy of labor over capital - a personal priority aspect of the work over the aspect of the material (LE 12)³. It follows that labor and capital can not be situated on one level and be treated as two independent, anonymous forces, in the co-production process. We must not set them in mutual opposition, “and still less can the actual people behind these concepts be opposed to each other“ (LE 13.14).

From the beginning the property issue is connected with labor. Man, realizing his genuine vocation to have "dominion over the earth" by working assimilates and for himself others the existing natural resources. Because the call to work directed to man is universal, consequently it should be noted that these goods were intended for all people. John Paul II calls to mind that Catholic social teaching recognizes and affirms the right to private property, also in regard to the "capital", speaking simply, of "means of production". It provides a basis for the exercise of freedom in the economic sphere, to use its right of initiative and entrepreneurship (LE 14; SRS 42). However, the right to private property is not absolute, but should be subordinate to the law of common use⁴. The ownership of the means of production is related to the responsibility for those who work in that workshop, who in fact are the "subject of work", as well as those whom the fruits of this work are to serve. It follows from this postulate that in the process of production were taken into account such opportunities that “working person wishes that, within the production process, provision be made for him to be able to know, that in his work, even on something that is owned in common, he is working *for himself*. “ (LE 15)⁵.

2. Capitalism and communism in the light of the criteria of human dignity

The above-formulated personalistic principle of the dignity of the person in relation to work, John Paul II consistently used as a criterion for assessing the existing in reality socio - economic systems: capitalism and communism.

² In CA 32 John Paul II extends the concept of capital, including in its scope also education, intelligence and creativity of man. In this context, though in a slightly different sens of meaning, it confirmed the validity of the statement that 'the main wealth of man is man himself '.

³ See also: LE 13, 14, 15, 22.

⁴ LE 14. “Private property, in fact, is under a social mortgage”. SRS 42. See also CA 6,30.

⁵ LE 14 lists examples of proposals for different forms of participation of workers in the ownership and management of the means of production.

The basic error of primitive capitalism was the emergence of opposition between labor and capital. Supporters of the economic and materialistic orientation treated work as a kind of "commodity" or anonymous "workforce". The objective dimension of work came first, while man was reduced to the role of "an instrument of production" (LE 7). John Paul II regrets the fact that despite the many international conventions that had been signed, also today there are phenomena characteristic for the so-called "unbridled capitalism" times⁶. At the same time he firmly states that the individuals, the more they are vulnerable in a given society, the more they should be of interest and concern for others, and in particular the intervention of public authorities. It thus recognizes the "principle of solidarity" as "one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization" (CA 10)⁷.

Another group of corrupt practices is associated with the absolutization of ownership, especially ownership of the means of production. It is connected with the tendency of absolutization of profit, which often goes hand in hand with the absolutization of power, leading to the emergence of real "structures of sin" (SRS 37). These structures tend to petrify effectively the divisions in the world into areas of poverty and backwardness and wealth and development. According to the Pope the position of 'rigid' capitalism, which defends the exclusive right of private ownership of means of production as an "untouchable dogma in economic life" is not acceptable (LE 14). Capitalism in this release is „a method of upholding the absolute predominance of capital, the possession of the means of production in contrast to the free and personal nature of human work" (CA 35).

In Western societies the phenomenon of economic exploitation has been overcome, however, alienation, which manifests itself in various forms of instrumental treatment of another human being has not been overcome (CA 41). The civilization of these countries is characterized by a kind of cult of consumption (consumerism). So it can be rightly called "the civilization of consumption". It is the phenomenon of "superdevelopment" - the opposite pole of the misery of underdevelopment - which consists of "excessive availability of every kind of material goods." It „easily makes people slaves of *possession* and of *immediate gratification*", condemning them to the pursuit of more and more and more perfect goods (SRS 28). The civilization of consumption very often refers directly to the instincts of man, ignoring his conscious personal nature (CA 39).

If we should therefore, raise the question of whether capitalism as a social and economical system would be an appropriate regime for the countries that are in the early stages of their development path, we could reply: „If by *capitalism* is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality and which sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious", then the answer is definitely negative (CA 42).

⁶ CA 7-8. The Pope writes that "the mistake of primitive capitalism and liberalism can be repeated in other circumstances of time and place" (LE 13).

⁷ See also: SRS: 38-40.

It should be noted that capitalism - next to the characteristics that have been criticised above - also contains many positive elements, which the Pope sees and mentions as a potential component of a properly constructed social and economical system, which we would like to return to.

Communism, or collectivism, preached by Marxism, was supposed to be a response and way to solve the "social question", first of all as a result of practical achievement, and later also in theory of a radical separation and opposition of labor and capital as the two "anonymous forces", autonomous factors of production (LE 13). In the realm of philosophy, the theoretical basis of this approach were provided by the orientations of economism and materialism and dialectical materialism. But also "in dialectical materialism man is not first and foremost the subject of work and efficient cause of the production process, but continues to be understood and treated in dependence on what is material, as a kind of *resultant* of the economic or production relations prevailing at a given period" (LE 13). That is why the Pope with an emphasis states that "the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature" (CA 13). The painful effects of this separation and opposing the capital with work and consequently the actual people behind these concepts, can not be healed by "a priori elimination of private ownership of the means of production "(...). These measures become the property of organized society "coming under the administration of another group of people, who though not owning them, from the fact of exercising power in society *manage* them on the level of the whole national or the local economy (...)". This group "claims for itself a monopoly of the disposal of the means of production and not refrains even from offending basic human rights" (LE 14)⁸.

Socialism emphasizes the idea of "class struggle", understood as a conflict that is not limited by any considerations of ethical or legal nature (CA 14). This conflict in its extreme form "rejects respect for the dignity of others (and consequently of oneself) (...). What is pursued is not the general good of society but a partian interest which replaces the common good and sets out to destroy whatever stands in its way" (CA 14). Therefore, the idea of "class struggle" leads in a straight line to militarism , which in its assumptions includes contempt for the dignity of the human person and gives priority to the principle of force against the principle of fairness and law - in the relations between different groups within society, as well as in the field of international relations (CA 14). The result of the violation of human rights regarding to property and freedom and initiative in the economic field is also a failure of the economic system and the destruction of the cultural, historical and religious dimensions of a nation (CA 24).

⁸ The Pope clearly states: „no social group, for example a political party, has the right to usurp the role of sole leader, since this brings about the destruction of the true subjectivity of society and of the individual citizens. /.../ In this situation the individual and the people become "objects" in spite of all declarations to the contrary and verbal assurances". SRS 15.

The primary causes of a false conception of the human person in the Marxist ideology and the communist system, which results in such serious deformities in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious areas of life, should be sought, according to John Paul II, in atheism. The denial of God deprives the concept of the human person of its foundation. Therefore, there can be no compromise between Christianity and Marxism (CA 26).

3. “A third way”?

In recent decades it is quite commonly believed that the purpose of the social doctrine of the Church is to develop an optimal political and economic system - most commonly situated somewhere between communism and capitalism.⁹ John Paul II clearly teaches that “the Church's social doctrine is not a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism (...). It constitutes *a category of its own*”. Its primary purpose is to explain the complex reality of human existence in society and in the international context by examining its compliance with Gospel teaching on man and his earthly vocation and transcendent at the same time (SRS 41). Thus it expresses explicitly that the essential criterion determining the moral value of the system is the underlying anthropology and its relationship to Christian anthropology.

Despite the above reservations it turns out that the social encyclicals of Pope John Paul II contain an overview of the optimal socio - economic relations in the scale of society and the world as well as a number of more detailed elements, which are implications of the consistently applied personalistic principium. This personalistic principium should be the starting point for constructing the entire socio - economic system. The attainment of a worker's rights cannot be doomed to be merely a result of economic systems which are guided chiefly by the criterion of maximum profit. “On the contrary – writes the Pope – it is respect for the objective rights of the worker (...) that must provide adequate and fundamental criterion for shaping the whole economy both in terms of any society, as well as in the whole of the world economic policy "(LE 17).

Thus the basic criterion for the value of individual rules and elements of governance socio - economic development should be principium personalistic. In its light under capitalism you can find items that deserve a positive assessment. For if by capitalism we understand an economic system which „recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector” (CA 42), such a vision of capitalism meets the requirements of Catholic social teaching¹⁰.

⁹ See: M. Zięba: Pokój owocem solidarności, in: PE, p. 135.

¹⁰ For this version of capitalism the Pope suggests other names: “business economy”, „market economy” or „free economy” (CA 42).

In the above description the presence of the free market is highlighted. The Pope says that "the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs" (CA 34). He warns however against "idolizing" the market and points out that a lot of people because of poverty do not have access to the market and are left on the margins of society (CA 49).

Another element of socio – economic relation associated with capitalism is **democracy**. The Pope expresses his appreciation towards a system which ensures the participation of citizens in making political decisions (CA 46). Today, however, democracy is quite common and is clearly tied to the philosophy of agnosticism and skeptical relativism. John Paul II points out that "in a situation where there is no ultimate truth (...), ideas and beliefs can easily be manipulated for reason of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism "(CA 46)¹¹. Contemporary social processes in which liberal ideology - even if only in relation to the problems of marriage and the family - increasingly begins to take shape of a new totalitarianism, are excellent examples of insight and foresight of the papal diagnosis.

The primary task of the state - according to John Paul II - is to ensure the safety of individual liberty and property, monetary stability and the existence of efficient public services and to ensure the observance of human rights in the economic sphere (CA 48). In the table above you can see the emphasis on **the principle of state servitude easement** with respect to particular people - members of the public.

One more element of social order postulated by Pope John Paul II is worth noting: the **principle of international solidarity**. The call for this solidarity in the social encyclicals of the Pope are common and are sounded off dramatically. In the last of them he writes that the aid granted to poor countries "it is not merely a matter of 'giving from one's surplus', but helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into sphere of economic and human development" (CA 58)¹². The difficulty with which it is being done can be seen from the example of efforts in applying decisions of international forums on *sustainable development* on a global scale and the dramatic gap between ambitious declarations and the very modest practical results.

In the above efforts to look at the social reality in the light of the principium of human dignity we have highlighted the need for only the most important elements of the social doctrine of John Paul II. But it is hard not to notice that they fall in a logical and coherent system. The personalistic principium consistently applied by the Pope, allows not only for a thorough assessment of the existing systems, social phenomena and processes in the modern world, but it also allows to build a compelling, positive vision of social relations, both in the scale of a single society, as well as on a global scale. This vision can be an opportunity for the troubled modern world.

¹¹ The poignant examples of this John Paul II cites in PT, pp. 139-140.

¹² See also: SRS 38-39, 43-45; CA 28, 35, 58; LE 8, 18. See also: A. Dylus, Nauka solidarnego rozwoju, in: PE, pp. 148-149, 154-155.

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Omówienie

Jedną z poważniejszych prób odpowiedzi na pytanie o przyszły kształt porządku społeczno-gospodarczego po 1989 r. jest nauczanie społeczne Jana Pawła II. Według Papieża, fundamentem każdego systemu gospodarczego jest principium personalne, zgodnie z którym „pierwszą podstawową wartością pracy jest sam człowiek”. W świetle tego kryterium Jan Paweł II dokonuje oceny kapitalizmu i komunizmu. Pierwszy z nich charakteryzuje antynomia pracy i kapitału, prowadząca w konsekwencji do dominacji kapitału nad podmiotowością człowieka, absolutyzowania prawa własności oraz kultu konsumpcji. W komunizmie prowadzi ona do likwidacji własności prywatnej środków produkcji, co uderza w podmiotowość człowieka i społeczeństwa. Jan Paweł II wskazuje elementy, które układają się w pozytywną wizję ładu społeczno-gospodarczego. Są to m. in.: podstawowa rola przedsiębiorstwa, wolny rynek, własność prywatna i wynikająca z niej odpowiedzialność za środki produkcji, wolna inicjatywa gospodarcza, demokracja oraz zasada solidarności międzynarodowej.