



Województwo
Śląskie



Instytut Myśli Polskiej
im. Wojciecha Korfanteo

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Województwa Śląskiego.



Współfinansowane przez
Unię Europejską

Wojciech Korfanty's Christian Anthropology

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Korfanty pointed out that the church "has in its treasury eternal principles defining moral responsibility and moral obligations of all factors in public and social life. One of the fundamental terms of Christian ethics is the dignity of the person (*dignitas personae*), which is inalienable and, derived from natural law, means a rational and free being. In this approach, man acquires subjectivity. The human person is superior to the world of things and cannot be reduced to it. Therefore, man is characterised by internal dynamics and openness. It is wholeness, quality, purposefulness and a priceless component of reality. Instead, things are quantitative, comparable, pointless, and static. In the light of the teaching of the Catholic Church, man is a physical and spiritual subject, acting voluntarily and socially, and enriching culture. An individual understood in this way constitutes an appropriate measure for its activity, it is not subject to instrumentalization and does not disappear into the mass. Wojciech Korfanty completed two semesters at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Royal University of Wrocław, where he attended lectures on, among others, political economy, history of philosophy, law and Polish literature. His professors at that time were such greats of science as Paul Jörs, Władysław Nehring, Feliks Dahn and Rudolf Leonhard. Following Korfanty's writings and speeches, when he was already an influential politician and social activist, one can find intellectual clues, the source of which was Catholic thought and French Christian personalism. Dignity above all. The Catholic interpretation of the workers' issue included in the encyclical „*Rerum Novarum*” of Leo XIII was not without significance for Korfanty's reflection. This Pope decided that the anthropological model of the 19th century was exhausted. In the scientific perspective of *homo sapiens*, reason and vitality could not be the only defining elements of man, and the perspective of *homo faber* was taken over by the growing socialist movements, which were opposed by the Catholic Church. In the aforementioned work, Leo XIII spoke about the pressing social and economic problems of the working class, pointing to a rethinking of the issues of work,

interclass cooperation, property and social justice, proving that the solutions proposed by the representatives of Marxism are wrong. According to Leo XIII, the state should not interfere in the family but only support it and intervene when it is threatened. Korfanty approached the matter in a similar way, writing: „(...) the family is the unit of the human race and all its social activities. When building any social institution, we see the family as the cornerstone at its foundation. The family is the nurturer of all traditions, the creator of all ideas and energies, the most important school of man, where he receives the first lessons that will last his whole life. On the workers' question, Leo XIII postulated the introduction of private property instead of the introduction of common property managed by representatives. According to the pope, social classes are also interdependent, so workers and their employers must learn to work together. „Of these duties fall upon the poor worker”, the pope wrote, „the following: to carry out fully and faithfully the work to which he was bound by a free and just agreement; not to harm the employer either in property or in person; in the mere defence of one's rights, refrain from violence and never resort to rebellion; avoid perverse people, who deliberately make exaggerated hopes and grand promises, which usually end in untimely disappointment and loss of property. But rich employers and masters have these duties: they must not treat a worker as a slave; it is necessary to respect in him, what is right, human dignity, which is enhanced by the mark of a Christian”. The enunciations of Leo XIII correspond to Korfanty's approach to the issue of the bureaucrats' strike: „While Christian morality allows collective redundancy in some cases to be the last weapon of oppressed workers and victims of injustice, Christian morality forbids civil servants from resorting to strike action”. The phenomenon of the strike was also criticised by the Peter's governor, recognizing its ineffectiveness and universal harmfulness. Leo XIII forbade exploiting workers and depriving them of their due pay. In the opinion of Leo XIII, the employer is obliged to provide his subordinates with a decent material existence, which would not only ensure survival but also allow them to save a certain amount of money. The lesson from Rerum Novarum is related to Korfanty's dilemmas on the history of the Church and the institution's demand for permanent introduction of social protection at the state level. „The Church, as the highest guardian of morality, from the beginning of its existence,” wrote the leader of the Third Silesian Uprising, has in its treasury eternal principles defining moral responsibility and moral duties of all factors in public and social life. (...) The Church not only stood up for the little ones

and the oppressed, but, as history teaches us, it often lent them help in gaining freedom and independence from the mighty of this world, especially when modern societies and states were born during the turbulent feudal times – the church played a role protector of the oppressed” [original writing]. Wojciech Korfanty also referred with esteem to other encyclicals of Leo XIII. In *Diuturnum*, he praised the Church's respect for forms of authority that serve the common good and result from the spirit, traditions and customs of society; in the encyclical „*Sapientiae Christianae*” he was impressed by the granting of full freedom to the heads of state in governing and supporting secular authorities by the Church; and in the encyclical „*Immortale Dei*” he distinguished a passage stating that any authority motivated by wisdom and care for citizens is approved by the Church. "So," wrote Leo XIII, although this sentence could well have been written by Korfanty, "among the numerous and heavy duties of the rulers, caring for the good of the people, this duty is in the first place, that they should give equal care to each estate, i.e. justice, which is called, i.e., which renders to each what is due to him and what should be rendered to him".

Korfanty and personalism

For Wojciech Korfanty, it was not only the position of the working masses that was important, but an individual with a well-established Christian morality, or more precisely Christian-personalistic. Through such thinking, the individual with the rights assigned to him did not disappear in the impersonal crowd. The assumptions of personalism, focusing on the person, were succinctly expressed already by the Roman philosopher Boethius, who claimed: „A person is an individual substance of a rational nature”. The autonomy of a person is inviolable, and the space in which a person can fully develop are interpersonal relationships and contact with God.

Christian personalism was not supposed to be a social or political project, but a commitment, a specific method, transcending the order of nature. Personalism was opposed to the idealistic and materialistic tradition - it was supposed to be the third way, integrating, but also going beyond the two mentioned directions. This trend was a total obligation to be oneself (authentic individual) and conditional (building a human community). One of the factors in the emergence of Christian personalism was the crisis of man, in response to the economic crisis after the famous „Black Thursday” - the crash of the New York Stock Exchange on October 24, 1929. Three years after the Wall Street drama, the French thinker Emmanuel Mounier founded the monthly „*Esprit*”, in which philosophers, theologians and journalists-moralists diagnosed the spiritual condition of man. According to Mounier, the personalist

revolution, shaping a society in which love reigns, will contribute to the healing of interpersonal relations. Apart from Mounier, another thinker from the Christian personalism trend who could influence Korfanty's views was Jacques Maritain. According to Maritain, drawing on the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, the human person as a being in itself, in the hierarchy of beings, stands above matter, setting goals and being able to determine the means and methods of their implementation. Man is also the image of God (imago, continued on page 13 of Dei) - thanks to reason and free will, he is able to direct himself towards values through cognitive and intentional structures. The main term in Maritain's social philosophy was integral humanism, i.e. the vision of a personalistic community, which is the proper social order. Integral humanism is a spiritual binder that connects people and immerses them in a higher dimension. A personalistic community (also called a personalistic democracy) was to consist in devoting to everyone what is due to them, i.e. respect, dignity and love. The personalist order referred to fundamental rights: to life, freedom, founding a family, bodily and private property, participation in elections, the possibility of establishing political parties, limiting state powers against a citizen and socio-economic rights (in short: to work and decent pay) .Fundamental rights, in Maritain's perspective, are upheld by the Catholic Church. Wojciech Korfanty, as the leader of the Upper Silesian Christian Democrats, could readily agree to personalist postulates, considering how important the role of the Catholic Church was for him in formulating good morals in private and collective life. As a summary, let us use a longer fragment written by Korfanty in 1927: „(...) the point is to return to people the sense of moral responsibility that they have lost, to restore their sense of duty and strengthen their moral conscience. For many years we have seen relentless efforts to undermine religion and the morality it espouses. The old supernatural faith is replaced by faith in the omnipotence of nature. And this is the reason for the growing immorality in public and private life. And therefore everyone should understand why we Catholics do not cease repeating with Leo XIII, with Pius X and Benedict XV, with the whole Christian tradition, with the whole Church, that if our societies want to exist, it is high time that they recognize the fatal mistake made in the day when it seemed to them that they could abandon the Christian discipline, which alone would be able to correct morals” [original writing].

Tłumaczenie powstało w ramach projektu realizowanego przez Instytut Myśli Polskiej im. Wojciecha Korfantego (2021-1-PL01-KA121-ADU-000006366). Instytut jest instytucją akredytowaną na lata 2021-2027, która otrzymała dofinansowanie z programu Erasmus+ w sektorze Edukacji dorosłych.

Tekst oryginalny: „Antropologia chrześcijańska Wojciecha Korfantego”, „Korfantówka” 1/2021, s. 13-14

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