

FOREWORD

When the debate between liberals and communitarians reached its quite impressive development more than twenty years ago, it had pretty quickly been predicted that the debate would soon end as fast as it appeared on the social-analytical scene. However, as the time was passing by, the arguments kept growing and it turned out that the topic of concern seems to be eternal. After all, liberal democracy, which in the meantime spread over new areas of the world, showed that it is never free of problems connected with the quality of the social ties, while sometimes it can even be accused of contributing to such problems.

Let us look at the recent analysis prepared by Marek Ziółkowski for the Civic Congress in 2010, where he claims that Poles are becoming more and more individualistic, oriented towards individual achievements and less and less caring for their social ties and communities. “The social bonds created in everyday productive activities are treated more and more instrumentally.”¹ Later on in his analysis he claims that although the symbolic community, seen on special occasions, may be said to be still working, the civic community is very weak: “Institutionalized means of expressing common concern for public affairs, for common good, do hardly work.”² This diagnosis can, therefore, hardly be optimistic. Maybe the inspiration to reflect and change this state of affairs can in contemporary Poland and in other societies with similar problems come

¹ Marek Ziółkowski, “Jednostki i wspólnota. Jakie Razem Polaków na początku XXI wieku?,” in: *Jaka wspólnotowość Polaków w XXI w.?*, Gdańsk: Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, 2010, p. 40 (transl. A.G.).

² *Ibid.*, p. 42. (transl. A.G.).

from the debate between liberals and communitarians which was started in Western societies almost three decades ago. This was the reason why I decided to come back to my dissertation on communitarian critiques of liberalism which I prepared in 2001. In order to be available to Polish readers, I translated it into Polish and published it in 2004.³ However, as I noticed the continued interest in the topic and the vitality of the present concern for the quality of social ties, civil society, and the level of civic virtue within various communities,⁴ being aware that the debates are taking place not only in Polish society but also in other contemporary societies, I decided to publish the English version of my work. My goal in the present publication is not to offer a renewed analysis of the problems

³ *Biorąc wspólnotę poważnie? Komunitarystyczne krytyki liberalizmu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2004. Particular chapters of my dissertation were published in variously modified versions in Polish or English as the following articles: "Nowoczesny etos pod ostrzałem: MacIntyre'a krytyka indywidualistycznego liberalizmu," *Edukacja Filozoficzna*, Vol. 27, 1999, pp. 265–74; "Neutrality, Autonomy and Order: Amitai Etzioni's Communitarian Critique of Liberalism Under Scrutiny," in: *A Decade of Transformation*, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Junior Fellows Conferences, Vol. VIII, Vienna 1999; "Walzer's Utopia of a Just Disharmony," *Studia Polityczne* 10, 2000, pp. 227–33; "Co tracimy, żyjąc osobno? A. MacIntyre'a krytyka współczesnego liberalnego indywidualizmu," in: Piotr W. Juchacz i Roman Kozłowski (eds.), *Filozofia a demokracja*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2001, pp. 251–62; "Samorząd zobowiązanych obywateli (Michaela J. Sandela tęsknota za republikanizmem)," in: Marek N. Jakubowski, Andrzej Szahaj, Krzysztof Abriszewski (eds.), *Indywidualizm, wspólnotowość, polityka*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2002, pp. 249–68; "Dysharmonijna wielość wspólnot: Michaela Walzera próba uratowania liberalizmu," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, 2002, pp. 79–93; "Wzajemne uznanie dialogicznych podmiotów: C. Taylora porządek holistyczny tworzony przez artykulację," in: Magdalena Żardecka-Nowak, Witold M. Nowak (eds.), *Tożsamość indywidualna i zbiorowa. Szkice filozoficzne*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2004, pp. 171–89.

⁴ Among other books devoted to this broad range of issues, let me offer a few exemplary publications: Jacek Kurczewski (ed.), *Civil Society in Poland*, Warsaw: Center for Social Research, IASS Warsaw University, 2003; Gerard Delanty, *Community*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004; Joanna Kurczewska (ed.), *Oblicza lokalności. Tradycja i współczesność*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2004; Paweł Śpiewak (ed.), *Komunitarianie. Wybór tekstów*, transl. P. Rymarczyk, T. Szubka, Warszawa: Aletheia, 2004; Magdalena Żardecka-Nowak, Witold M. Nowak (eds.), *Tożsamość indywidualna i zbiorowa. Szkice filozoficzne*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2004; Jacek Kurczewski (ed.), *Lokalne wzory kultury politycznej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2007; Joanna Kurczewska (ed.), *Oblicza lokalności. Ku nowym formom życia lokalnego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2008.

raised by communitarians. Neither is it going to be an in-depth analysis of broadly understood phenomenon of communitarianism in its totality. I do not aspire to offer an analysis of fully embraced theories of chosen communitarians. My concern is to direct the attention of those who are presently involved in analysing the community issues to the writings of those people who were dealing with the same problems some time ago. That is why I purposefully did not broaden my former analysis with newer publications (though I did enrich the bibliography at the end of the book): although I have been following a lot of what the analyzed authors have published since my dissertation was completed, I still claim that the crux of their ideas concerning the points I chose for analysis was well expressed by them during the time of the hottest debates with a variety of liberal arguments. My intention is now to make my analysis available to those readers in Poland and abroad who read English and who do not understand Polish, who are interested in discussing the sources of crises of communities visible in many areas of the world, and who are interested in recurrent discovery of the debate from the time when it reached its peak, when it was the most sharp. It seems to me that the time of the most vivid debate in the West in the 1980's and 1990's managed to create still interesting concepts and arguments pertaining to community, its problems, and the so called social nature of individuals. Having in mind the fact of growing international cooperation and mobility of scientists and students, I hereby present my work to the English-speaking readers, hoping that after reading this older analysis of the permanent social problem, they will be inspired to look into other books written by Polish authors, including those who offer contrary points of view or those who offer various ways of solving the described problems, presenting especially the Polish republican and solidarity-oriented traditions as alternatives to the views dominant in the Western societies.