

A BOOK REVIEW OF "KOMUNITARIANIE. WYBÓR TEKSTÓW",
 edited by Paweł Śpiewak, selection Paweł Śpiewak,
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**COMMUNITARIANISM AS
 A REFUTATION OF LIBERALISM**

The dynamic and range of polemics among social scientists can testify to branches of science vivacity and progress. Especially when those polemics' implications are not closed inside the academic world, but they influence social and political life. This situation refers to liberal-communitarian debate.

In 1956 Peter Laslett in *Philosophy, Politics and Society* announced the death of political philosophy. This subdisciplines' end, as well as the whole philosophy, was connected with the rudimental modern world's split in the humanistic and scientific vision. The collapse and rot of the political philosophy (Leo Strauss) reached their culmination in the logical positivism and its derivatives' supremacy time. This neopositivism had been looking for the clear criteria of the science and metaphysics demarcation and, at the same time, had tried to exclude metaphysics outside the legitimated reflection.

Although the neopositivism is contemporary on the defensive, its outcomes and intellectual movements inspired by it are still vivacious. Philosophy is also criticized by different thinkers. The condition of philosophy on the whole is not very good, but some of its branches are really dynamic and progressive, for example logic.

This situation of progress takes places in the political philosophy. There are many causes of such a state, but liberal-communitarian debate which dominated (along with the postmodernism debate) contemporary polemics of the whole western philosophy is among the most important ones.

The beginning of liberal-communitarian debate is John Rawls' publication *A Theory of Justice*, 1971. In this book Rawls tried to refresh the Kantian philosophy without referring to transcendental subject but by showing that the first principles come from a hypothetical situation of choice – from the "original position". As he writes: "The theory of justice tries to present a natural procedural rendering of Kant's conception of the kingdom of ends, and of the notions of autonomy and the categorical imperative. In this way the underlying structure of Kant's doctrine is detached from its metaphysical surroundings so that can be seen more clearly and presented relatively free from objection". The original position as Rawls' answer to Kant, is grounded on assumption which is an attempt (successful, in Rawls' opinion) to find an Archimedean point. This assumption – called "the veil of ignorance" – shows that the parties in original position do not have knowledge that would differentiate any one of them from any other, so they are blind and can not recognize their place in society, sex,

class, race, strength, intelligence, wealth, fortune, or other natural abilities and their conceptions of the good, aims, values, or purposes in life. Parties in original position know that they possess such conceptions, but must choose the principles of justice in temporary ignorance of them. This assumption's aim is to prevent the choice of principles from being conditioned by the social and natural circumstances. The veil of ignorance guarantees that the principles of justice will be chosen under conditions of equality and fairness.

The Rawls' solution is to distinguish the right and the good, a framework of basic rights, and the conceptions of the good which parties may choose within the framework. The right is prior to the good for Kantian liberals: individual rights cannot be based on any particular conception of the good life and what legitimize the rights is not an utilitarian point of view or on the other hand promote the good, but that they create a fair framework which lets individuals choose their own values.

A Theory of Justice, on the one hand, caused the feeling of triumph among liberal philosophers, but on the other one, was an impulse to wide refutation. Some of this critics were communitarians, first of all: Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael J. Sandel, Michael Walzer, Amitai Etzioni, Robert N. Bellah.

The book under review is an anthology of, in the majority, inaccessible for Polish readers communitarians' texts. The anthology is divided into six main parts (and introduction by Paweł Śpiewak): 1. *The Responsive Communitarian Platform – Rights and Responsibilities: Communitarian*

Network – which is a kind of social-political communitarian manifesto; 2. *The Critic of Liberalism and Individualism* which contains the most important and most interesting philosophical essays by communitarian luminaries – the critic is the heart of the stream: Charles Taylor's *Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate* – a part of Nancy L. Rosenblum's book *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Michael J. Sandel's *The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self* – the essay published in "Political Theory", which is the summary of ideas presented in not translated into Polish Sandel's *opus magnum* – *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Michael Walzer's *The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism* published in "Political Theory", David Gauthier's *The Liberal Individual* – a part of his book *Morals and Agreement*, Michael Walzer's *Liberalism and the Art of Separation* published in "Political Theory", Will Kymlicka's *Liberalism and Communitarianism* published in "Canadian Journal of Philosophy"; 3. *The Perfection of Community* which contains affirmative conception of communitarian political philosophy: Amitai Etzioni's *The Responsive Community: A Communitarian Perspective* published in "American Sociological Review", Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton's *Transforming American Culture* a part of their book *Habits of Heart*; 4. *In the Searching of Identity* which contains two essays by Charles Taylor – *The Moral Topography of the Self* (a part of Stanley B. Messer's book *Hermeneutics and Psychological Theory*) and Philip Selznick's *Personhood and*

Moral Obligation (a part of his book *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community*); 5. *The State, the Nation, the Common Good*, which contains essays by Alasdair MacIntyre *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* (a part of John Arthur's book *Morality and moral Controversies*), Michael Walzer's *The new Tribalism. Notes on a difficult Problem* published in "Dissent", David Miller's *The Nation-State: a modest Defence* (a part of Chris Brown's book *Political Restructuring in Europe. Ethical Perspective*), Amy Gutmann's *The Virtues of Democratic Self-Constraint* (a part of Amitai Etzioni's book *New Communitarian Thinking*), Jeffrey Ambramson, Elizabeth Bussiere's *Free Speech and Free Press* (a part of Amitai Etzioni's book *New Communitarian Thinking*); 6. *Social Sciences, Political Philosophy* which contains essay by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton's *Appendix: Social Science as Public Philosophy* a part of their book *Habits of Heart*.

The anthology under review refers to the main conceptions of communitarian critique of liberalism and affirmative ideas of this original stream. In fact, communitarianism is, first of all, antiliberalism, and its intellectual worth is the negation, especially the refutation of Rawls' political philosophy. For this cause the second part of the anthology is the most important and widest chapter. In this part we have got a chance to become acquainted with all main communitarian arguments against liberalism.

Communitarian refutation is conducted on three levels which can be called: 1. Metatheoretical; 2. Anthropological; 3. So-

cio-political. On the metatheoretical level communitarians try to call supposed neutrality of liberalism in question. As they argue, liberal doctrine, especially in Rawls' version, is not an Archimedean point but only one of the various fighting creeds which only pretend a neutrality. As they say, it is not legitimized to postulate a cultural neutrality when you are already cultural encumbered. On this level the liberal-communitarian debate is *de facto* a polemic: universalism - particularism. Liberalism postulates its primacy over any conception of the good and suggests it is a doctrine that does not propose any particular end or good. Communitarianism riposted that justice as fairness is not primary over the good and neutral, but it is only a consequence of traditions and values of Western World.

On the anthropological level this polemic concentrates on two opposed conceptions of the self. Rawls' liberalism assumes that the self (it is the Kantian self indeed) is a choosing one and is not depending on the ends and desires it may have. "The self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it; even a dominant end must be chosen from among numerous possibilities." The priority of the self over its conceptions of good and aims implies that the self can freely choose its goals, visions of good life and the self cannot be defined by them. Communitarians say that people who see themselves as an unencumbered selves are wrong because some of the people's roles create themselves. For example, A. MacIntyre tells about the narrative conception of the self, and M. J. Sandel critics liberal idea of unen-

cumbered self and postulates conception of confidently situated self.

On the socio-political level communitarians show that there are a lot of spheres which we cannot accept in the liberal societies: excluded social groups, dimensions of poverty, moral permissivism, egoistic competition, anomy and atomism. Communitarians postulate civil society, strong democracy, increasing protection of marriages. Generally speaking, they propose such kind of politic that would promote communities and activities inside the communities but only in a certain moral perspective.

The anthology under review is a wide profile of the whole communitarian political philosophy and the most important problems of liberal-communitarian debate. The anthology first of all refers to the critique philosophical arguments proposed by communitarians against liberal thinkers on all three mentioned above levels. Especially essays by Charles Taylor (*Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate*), Michael J. Sandel (*The Procedural Repub-*

lic and the Unencumbered Self), Michael Walzer (*The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism*) and Will Kymlicka (*Liberalism and Communitarianism*) provide a review through the rudimental ideas of communitarian political philosophy. *The responsive communitarian platform* is also worth of paying attention, as it is a social program of this stream. Alasdair MacIntyre (*Is Patriotism a Virtue?*), Michael Walzer (*The new Tribalism. Notes on a difficult Problem*) and David Miller (*The Nation-State: a modest Defence*) point the problem of the nation state, patriotism and nationalism which are connected with a community vision. The absent of some part of MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (it is not translated into Polish and it is not commonly known in Poland) even though it is one of the two most important author's books and it is an amplification of *After virtue* – it is rather a reflection about the reception of the communitarian thinking in Polish than a blame against this anthology because this book is a long step towards changing this state.