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# THE PERSONALISTIC ASPECT OF TRUTH AND DIALOGUE IN THE CONTEXT OF KAROL WOJTYŁA'S PHILOSOPHY: JOHN PAUL II'S ETHICS OF MEDIA

Arkadiusz MODRZEJEWSKI

## ABSTRACT:

This article offers analysis of a personalistic dimension of truth and dialogue in normative ethics of media communication by Karol Wojtyła who is better known as Pope John Paul II. Karol Wojtyła was also a philosopher who was involved in the reflections devoted to epistemological issues, although it was not his main field of study. However, the issue of truth was often present in his philosophical and theological considerations. In Wojtyła's earlier, pre-pontifical works, the reflection dedicated to the truth was a part of his anthropological and ethical conception. The notion of truth had a deep personalistic nature in the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła. It was the truth about a human being understood as a person. In later times of his intellectual activity, after being appointed as the Pope, he outlined a social dimension of truth that was understood as a base of human and social relations. It also concerned the facet of mass media which is reflected on in this text. The article is written from the perspective of the normative approach. It is typical for the ethics; however, the content of the study should rather be classified as metaethics because it is in fact a metareflection. The text is divided into five parts. Besides Introduction and Conclusions, there are also paragraphs dedicated to the personalistic dimension of the ethics in the light of philosophy and papal teachings of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II, to the importance of truth in media as well as to the need of including real dialogue in the mediasphere. In the conclusion the author states that in the light of Wojtyła's ethics of mass media, a depreciation of the value of the truth and dialogue makes mass media audiences liable for the propaganda and so-called total truths which are a perverse form of objective truth.

## KEY WORDS:

ethics of mass media, Karol Wojtyła, truth, dialogue, personalism



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# Introduction or Why Wojtyła? And Why Ethics of Mass Media?

Writing on Karol Wojtyła's or rather John Paul II's philosophical and theological thought can be understood, especially regarding to a Pole, as an idolatrous cult of the Polish Pope. Unfortunately, Wojtyła is very often treated as a 'golden calf' of Polish Catholicism, also by many scholars who used to build him empty monuments. The term 'golden calf' was thought out and popularised by one of the former prominent members of congregation of Jesuits. In my opinion the term rightly describes the state of mentality of Polish Catholicism. I will not point to the exact examples of this attitude. There is too much proof. However, from the other side we can hear more and more often critical voices which debunk Wojtyła.<sup>1</sup> In this cacophony of paeans of praise from the one side and often too trivial and perfunctory criticism from the other side, we forget about the intellectual heritage of a philosopher and a theologian who had a strong influence on social changes at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His philosophical as well as theological achievement is treated – and not only by Polish apologists – as a serious input into the world intellectual discussion.<sup>2</sup>

We can disagree with Wojtyła, we can criticise him but we should also objectively and without any prejudices take a look at his philosophical as well as theological and pontifical reflections. He is one of the most serious philosophers from not only Poland, but also from Central Europe as a whole. Without any doubt we can state that he was the most influential thinker from this region. His voice was not only heard by a small group of intellectuals but his auditorium can be counted by millions of listeners. However, the numbers are not important here. I do not want to focus on his *impact factor* or *getting likes* on Facebook. I would rather pay attention to his originality as well as to coherence and clarification of his opinions and ideas. They should be the main concern of our considerations and evaluation. His achievements are so extensive and multi-facet that they have become parts of different discourses which can be found quite far from the core of his intellectual activity, i.e. from philosophical anthropology and ethics. For instance Wojtyła as a philosopher and Pope John Paul II is subject to debate on the ground of philosophy of science thanks to his encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*; he is also 'discussed' in the field of political theory where elements of his philosophy and theological reflection has become a part of normative approaches.<sup>3</sup> Finally, his works are considered in the context of philosophy and ethics of mass media.

It is valuable to take a look at mass media from the perspective of normative ethics since the media have an important role in the current world.<sup>4</sup> The ethics of mass media with its sub-disciplines, i.e. professional ethics of journalists as well as ethics of other professions involved in media production and broadcasting of mass media messages, is treated as a kind of applied ethics which we can define as a philosophical reflection formulating judgments and norms of moral activity that are essential for a specific types of human acts.<sup>5</sup> Michał Drożdż, the great Polish philosopher of mass media, defines the term "ethics of mass media" as "an entirety of a theoretical reflection on mass media sphere being a space of morality, i.e. on a field of media choices and acts".<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the reflection dedicated to the status of truth in mass media is one of the key problems.

1 BARTOŚ, T.: *Jan Paweł II. Analiza krytyczna*. Warszawa : Sic!, 2008.

2 BUTTIGLIONE, R.: The Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła Has Two Main Features. In MALINVAUD, E., GLENDON, M. A. (eds.): *Conceptualization of the Person in Social Sciences*. Vatican City : The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2005, p. 44-53; GÓRSKI, E.: John Paul II's Idea of Universalism. In *Dialogue and Universalism*, 2006, Vol. 16, No. 11-12, p. 21-34; MacINTYRE, A.: *God, Philosophy, Universities*. London : Continuum International Publishing, 2009, p. 165-171.

3 RENGGER, N.: Political Theory and International Relations: Promised Land or Exit from Eden? In *International Affairs*, 2000, Vol. 76, No. 4, p. 763; GALGANEK, A.: Teoria stosunków międzynarodowych i teoria polityczna stosunków międzynarodowych. In *Athenaeum*, 2009, Vol. 21, p. 19; MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Uniwersalistyczna wizja stosunków międzynarodowych w myśli społecznej i filozoficznej Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II. In KUPCZAK OP, J., RADZIECHOWSKI, D. (eds.): *Jan Paweł II. Posługa myślenia – 9*. Kraków : Uniwersytet Papieski Jana Pawła II, 2011, p. 180.

4 GÁLIK, S.: *Filozofia a médiá. K filozofickej reflexii vplyvu médií na uváranie (súčasnej) kultúry*. Bratislava : Iris, 2012, p. 11-14.

5 ŚLIPKO SJ, T.: *Zarys etyki szczegółowej, vol. I. Etyka osobowa*. Kraków : WAM, 2005, p. 21.

6 DROŹDŹ, M.: *Etyczne orientacje w mediasferze*. Tarnów : Biblos, 2006, p. 36.

Karol Wojtyła as a philosopher was not especially involved in epistemological researches. However, the problem of truth was a pivotal aspect of his philosophical and theological considerations. In the earlier, pre-pontifical works, the reflection on the truth was mainly present as a part of his anthropological and ethical thought. The truth has a deep personalistic nature in his philosophy. It was firstly the truth on a man understood as a person. The social dimension of the truth was outlined especially in the later period of his intellectual activity. The truth was considered as a base of interpersonal relations, also in media facet. He did not think about mass media only in the evangelization context, but also in the context of ethics.<sup>7</sup>

## Personalistic Character of Wojtyła's Ethics of Mass Media

Personalistic philosophy defines man as a person, i.e. a rational and irreducible being – a substantial (independent) being. Man being a person has inalienable rights, especially having the right to life, dignity and freedom. Person as a rational being is charged by responsibility for one's own actions. In the personalistic perspective a human being, i.e. person is also a fundamental and final criterion of moral judgment of individual, collective or institutional activity. Only these acts which are directed at good of person (own good and good of others) can be recognised as moral and acceptable. Breaking of rights of a person, his or her life, personal integrity, dignity or freedom, leads inevitably to the negative moral evaluation of these acts. Generally speaking, we can state that personalistic philosophy always starts its considerations from the phenomenon of person, also in terms of a moral and ethical aspect.

We notice this schema of philosophising also in anthropological and ethical works by Karol Wojtyła as well as in the later period – let us call it 'pontifical' – in his numerous papal documents and speeches. One of the commentators of the Pope considering his papal social teaching – ethics of mass media is concerned there as well – noticed: "Social reflection of the Pope always begins with a human being and returns to him/her".<sup>8</sup> It is characteristic for the personalism that a person and his/her good is a measure for a moral judgment.

The person is a specific internal world. Fundamental structures of the person are: existing in oneself, possession of awareness and what is important self-awareness, human experience, autotelicity, self-determination and self-fulfilment, participation in community as well as ability to transcend oneself. The person has an internal and external dynamic. It expresses oneself by own actions. They can be directed either "on self" – internal acts (spirituality, morality, internal experiences) or "to outside" – external acts (creation, work, culture, economic activity, etc.). The person reveals the ability of getting into the relations through these acts. It also means that the person is able to create the relation with other person thanks to own activity.<sup>9</sup>

The reason, the human rationality is an element that provides the person with this specific power. "Reasoning – according to the personalistic assumptions – is a special act of realisation of the person in the face of the mystery of being in its existence, form, essence and relation of to-personal."<sup>10</sup> The reason distinguishes man from the world of nature. Only human being is gifted with the reason – *animal rationale*. Thanks to the reason human being becomes a part of the spiritual world. He or she can rise above the materiality in which he or she is physically rooted as well as create symbolical acts. That is why we search for the subjectivity of the person in its rationality. Each person is *ex definitione* a subject. Old definition given by Boethius (a.d. 480-524), the Roman philosopher, speaks that *est rationalis naturae individua substantia*. It means: *an individual substance of a rational nature*. So, if rationality is a constitutive element of the person, person is also a subject. This subjectivity expresses itself in epistemological aspect (subject of cognition) as well as in anthropological

7 LASKOWSKA, M., MARCYŃSKI, K.: Audiovisual Media in the Context of Communicative and Ethical Competences – Media Theology Approach. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 13.

8 HECKEL, R.: Duchowy status wymagań społecznych w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II. In *Communio*, 1984, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 12.

9 BARTNIK, C.: *Personalizm*. Lublin : Oficyna Wydawnicza Czas, 1995, p. 158; GÁLIK, S.: Cyber-Spirituality as a New Form of Religion? In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 6, p. 10-11.

10 BARTNIK, C.: *Hermeneutyka personalizmu*. Lublin : KUL, 1994, p. 177.

and ethical one (acting subject and subject of natural right and morality) – what is especially interesting for us. Of course it also has implication for the ethics of mass media what we see in case of Karol Wojtyła's – John Paul II's conception.

Importance of the subjectivity of the person on the ground of mass media ethics reveals particularly when we analyse the person in the relational scheme with respect to other persons as well as when we present the person in the context of personal acts. Any communication also possesses this characteristic. Each form of communication is the act of a person; communication is thus a personal act. It has an interpersonal dimension – except intrapersonal communication (with oneself) – due to engagement of other subjects in the communication process. It is important to remind here that we should not limit using of the term “media” to the transmitters of communicates. I do not mean only technology mass media operate with but all elements of the process of media communication. Thanks to media we can communicate at the world-wide level. They help us cross physical borders. Today we can speak about global mass media and global communication. Regardless of the geographical range of mass media (global, national, regional or local), “communication” being implemented by mass media is essential for our considerations because thanks to it we can discover a deep personalistic sense.

Firstly, our (human) agency is the base of communication. I have mentioned above that the communication is a specific human act. Our awareness and self-awareness, also of our acts, distinguish us from the animal world. Thanks to the act – called *actus humanus* in the philosophical tradition and called *actus personae* by Karol Wojtyła to more clearly underline a rational and individual character of human activity – human being expresses oneself and reveals own ‘self’. Transcendence of person is disclosed by the act. Briefly speaking, our acts are externalisation of ourselves, our subjectivity and our internal world.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, community is being built through the process of communication. Latin etymology of both terms “communication” and “community”, i.e. *communicare*, means to connect, to make common as well as to discuss, to confer and to inform.

That is why in the light of personalistic philosophy we do not understand the communicational act as only a transfer of information. It has also, or better it first of all has a community-making character. The community of persons is being built thanks to communication that is formed from acts externalising human subjectivity. Human collectivity which can be determined as a society or community may be distinguished from an animal herd by one constitutive factor. Community or society is based on communicational acts which are an expression of subjectivity of individuals who create this collectivity. Of course animals communicate inside their herds but their communication is based on an instinct. Human being communicates in the aware way as well as self-aware way because he or she is aware of his or her own ‘self’ that is externalised in the communicational act. It can be expressed by an exemplary conviction: “I know I am a subject of communication”. Human being can create, together with others, a community, i.e. collectivity of communicating subjects. It is important for Karol Wojtyła's standpoint that human being should not lose own distinctness, individuality and otherness in the community. If the relational scheme is built in a way which destroys the human uniqueness, it leads to alienation. That is why we can see the ontological primary of personal subject over community in the philosophical anthropology of Karol Wojtyła. This Wojtyła's scheme is in opposition to thinking which is typical for collectivist systems that reduce ontological status of persona – individual as a substantial being. So, we can infer from anthropological premises a moral imperative that tells us that a person commonly existing and acting with others does so to save own ‘self’ and realise oneself.<sup>12</sup>

Key question for the ethics, essential also for ethics of mass media, especially in its personalistic approach, is the issue of common good. Although Karol Wojtyła rejected the collectivist anthropological theories, he did not represent an individualist attitude. Consideration dedicated to the topic of common good is an important part of his anthropological and ethical vision. He was sure that category was a *conditio sine qua non* of existence of a community. However, understanding of common good in the collectivist conceptions

11 WOJTYŁA, K.: Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota. In WOJTYŁA, K. (ed.): *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*. Lublin: RW KUL, 2000, p. 385.

12 WOJTYŁA, K.: Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota. In WOJTYŁA, K. (ed.): *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*. Lublin: RW KUL, 2000, p. 392-393.

– Wojtyła called them “totalistical” – is completely different than in philosophy of Karol Wojtyła. Reference to the common good is for the philosopher from Wadowice “a special expression of transcendence which is characteristic for a human being as understanding a person. In the special way also the relation to the common good realizes this transcendence”.<sup>13</sup> This statement connotes a moral norm that is interesting also for ethics of mass media. So, relation to the common good, unifying many subjects identifying themselves as some “we”, is grounded in the relation to both transcendental (universal) values, i.e. truth and good. Transcending of persons in their act, also in the relation to the common good, means in ethical aspect an opening up to the truth and good.<sup>14</sup>

According to anthropology of Karol Wojtyła, we can notice that the common good, which brings also moral consequences, is treated as a tool with regard to individual goods. The person expects from community he or she is living in to be able “to choose these things which other choose and that is why that other choose as own good”, serving to fulfilment of this person. Simultaneously “on the base of the same ability of participation that is an essence of being and acting together with others, a person expects its own acts to serve grounded community, to support it and to enrich. In this axiological scheme, a human being is ready to give up individual goods, sacrificing them for the community”. It is not “against the nature” because – as Karol Wojtyła convincingly stated in his most important book *The Acting Person (Osoba i czyn)* – “since such a sacrifice corresponds with the ability of participation inherent in man, and because this ability allows him to fulfil himself”.<sup>15</sup>

Reassuming, we notice that on the ground of personalistic anthropology and ethics a human being as a rational and free being is a subject focusing references on values and their experiences. In this dimension a human being – person is also a subject in the space of mass media (*mediasphere*). We can see it in both aspects: transcending oneself by the act (act of communication) and creation of bonds with other subjects participating in the communicational processes. It makes us conscious that a human being understood as a person is a main base and principle for ethics of mass media or wider for ethics of communication. As a person, human being is an autotelic value (a value in oneself). And that is why the person is a source and base for moral obligations.<sup>16</sup>

## Personalistic Dimension of the Truth in the Media Space

We have to content our considerations dedicated to truth being one of the most elementary issues of ethics of mass media in the personalistic context as well. The truth in the approach of Wojtyła's personalism becomes a value unifying people and creating a community of their living. It is found as a source of other social principles and values, i.e. freedom, responsibility, solidarity, justness, etc.<sup>17</sup> The quotation of the book by Józef Tischner, one of the most influential Polish personalistic philosophers, clearly reflects on the core of the problem. He stated, considering the relation between freedom and truth, that “the truth is the first good of freedom. Only truth frees [...]. The freedom does not exist in the emancipation from the value of truth. [...] If there is more truth in our relations, more freedom is between us as well.”<sup>18</sup> These words harmonise with the essence of papal encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis*. In his first encyclical letter Pope John Paul II noticed: “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” These words contain both a fundamental requirement and a warning: “the requirement of an honest relationship with regard to truth as a condition

13 WOJTYŁA, K.: Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota. In WOJTYŁA, K. (ed.): *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*. Lublin: RW KUL, 2000, p. 405.

14 WOJTYŁA, K.: Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota. In WOJTYŁA, K. (ed.): *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*. Lublin: RW KUL, 2000, p. 405.

15 WOJTYŁA, K.: *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht, Boston, London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, p. 283.

16 DROŹDŹ, M.: *Osoba i media. Personalistyczny paradygmat etyki mediów*. Tarnów: Biblos, 2005, p. 39.

17 WADOWSKI, J.: Prawda jako wydarzenie międzyludzkie. Dialog i media. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?* Tarnów: Biblos, 2010, p. 41.

18 TISCHNER, J.: *Myslenie według wartości*. Kraków: ZNAK, 2011, p. 217-218.

for authentic freedom, and the warning to avoid every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world”.<sup>19</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, the Italian philosopher specialising in Wojtyła’s philosophical and ethical thought, speaks in the same spirit. He was convinced that true freedom is subordinated to truth. In one of his works he states: “becoming a possessor of own ‘self’ thanks to the power of obedience to the truth as well as thanks to power of sinking in the Truth and in that way constituting own ‘self’ as a person and taking care of world (pastor of being), a human being is becoming really free in the perspective of realization of the truth and good.”<sup>20</sup>

The truth in the philosophical system of Karol Wojtyła is examined in both aspects. Firstly it is examined in the anthropological aspect as the truth about the person revealing in its acts. Secondly, it has a teleological dimension – the truth as an aim of the person. In the first aspect we respect the truth about the person with its attributes, especially with its personal dignity. Also the truth about oneself contents there. As I have mentioned above, Wojtyła’s anthropology presumes that the person expresses itself, externalises itself by its acts (phenomenological approach). That personal act originating from the internal world of the person should be true form of its nature what also means that it should testify about the person in the authentic way, it presents the person in the true light. Transcendence of the person in the truth guarantees authenticity and truthfulness of the act. The human being – thanks to his/her internal dynamism – is able to transcend all own defects as well as to win over own deficiencies ensuing from a defective nature. Thanks to that authentic and true interpersonal communication is possible, also in its mass media dimension.<sup>21</sup>

Free will that is an attribute of the person has a decisive importance for the truthfulness of acts, also the communicational ones. But freedom is not a synonym of wilfulness. We can obtain the true freedom only thanks to the truth. It is a *conditio sine qua non* of the freedom. By orientation to the truth, also to truth about oneself, the person releases from both determinisms: biological and social one. Thanks to that a human being is able to consciously and freely make decisions.<sup>22</sup>

On the ground of ethical reflection this anthropological conception leads to a treatment of searching for the truth as a moral obligation. Human being, because of rational nature being a source of personal dignity, is called to search for the truth. Briefly speaking, the truth is given to a human being. He or she is not treated as an owner of the truth or its creator. He or she is rather its searcher or discoverer. It demands intellectual efforts. It is easier to take unconsciously and automatically truths “prepared before”. Human being is fed them also by mass media. It is harder to put oneself out to verify information, confront it with reality, make a moral judgment, etc. But our dignity as human beings, persons gifted with a reason and free will, obligates us – in Karol Wojtyła’s opinion – to take efforts while searching for the truth. This opinion concerns both kinds of truths: prosaic ones, “truths of a common day” which are present in the mass media as well as principle truths – a truth about essence of our humanity, about sense of our existence and finally about the God – Absolute as the highest Truth.<sup>23</sup> The teleological approach to the issue expresses itself in these endeavours to the truth. However, it is also attached in ontology, because finally “a human being discovering the truth and living the truth is a <<true>> human being, it means that he or she makes everything according to a value and dignity of his/her person. [...] The integration of the person in the truth guarantees an authenticity of man; it means this kind of activity that is always a realization of a good.”<sup>24</sup>

A search for the truth as well as an allegiance of truth if we finally find it is treated by Karol Wojtyła as a moral imperative. Each human being is obliged to bind his/her life with the truth. Only the truth, for which truthfulness is a practical expression in relations between persons, conditions recognition of human behaviour as a moral act. An abandonment of a principle of truthfulness is classified as an immoral act. Karol Wojtyła took care of “spirit of truth”. This attitude means primarily that we – in some measure – treat recognised truth

as a part of ourselves. So by sharing it we supposedly share ourselves. In principal it is not only the attitude or behaviour but also a *conditio sine qua non* of creation of community with other people. Truths which we can obtain or we can approach are determined as a part of our common ‘self’. I do not mean truths which we can obtain thanks to observation or any form of research. These truths seem to be impersonal and in some sense they are also independent from the knowing and communicating subject. They express external, generally physical world. However, we can also talk about truths which can be defined as existential ones. So to say they co-create us as persons. Commenting on the thought of Gabriel Marcel, the French personalistic philosopher, Jacek Salij notices that “We recognise the truth of love, truth of sense of life, truth of advantage of good over evil, truth of overcoming own or other’s suffering, truth of forgiving, etc. because it concerns something that is realising in ourselves, something in which we are immersed.”<sup>25</sup> So, a care for the “spirit of truth” means here primarily permanent efforts for a realisation of the truth, its verification, justification and advancement. We are not the “owners of the truth” but we always have to look for its sense.<sup>26</sup>

The truth of existence and the care for it are revealed in dynamism of the person. ‘Self’ is defined as a subject of self-revelation. Cognition is understood here as a personal act – *actus personae*. The truth of human being is revealed by the knowing subject who cognises own “to be” – in Latin *esse*. Thus we see that the truth about the self-knowing subject is linked together with the same subject.<sup>27</sup> It brings the moral imperative to base our life on the truth understood as a foundation of the values.<sup>28</sup> In this context it is important to have a properly shaped conscience. The person has to feel an internal necessity of responsibility for the truth in both dimensions: regarding oneself and regarding other persons. However, the responsibility regarding oneself is a starting point: *firstly I have to be responsible to myself, then in the next step to be responsible to others*. In his greatest work *Osoba i czyn* (*The Acting Person*) Karol Wojtyła stated: “Moral truthfulness – the person’s proper relation to moral truth – stands guard not only when the action issues forth but also when it penetrates into the person. [...] It is this innermost and thus most fundamental relation of the person to truth [...] that lies at the origin of both obligation and responsibility. Responsibility to somebody, regardless of any other appropriate relations, develops and is expressed in relation to its own subject. I myself am also the <<somebody>> to whom I feel and am responsible. If this elementary form of responsibility were not inherent in the whole dynamism of fulfilment, it would be difficult to understand any responsibility whatever. The world of persons finds its experiential starting point and foundation in the experience of the ego as the person. At the ego-person begins the road which leads to other person seen both in the community of mankind and in religious perspectives.”<sup>29</sup>

This ontological and anthropological fundament of the truth becomes in the context of the ethics of mass media a practical principle to speak truth.<sup>30</sup> In the human relations, among them in the relations between subjects of media communication – we have to remember that it is also a kind of human relations – a moral imperative exists which imposes an obligation of searching for the truth, respect for the truth and its protection on human being. Rejecting the principle of the truth, what also means basing of life and activity on a falsehood, leads us to an undermining of the ontological fundaments of community as well as in individual dimension to a violation of dignity of persons who are affected by falsehood.

Thus only truthfulness as a practical aspect of cognition of the truth and loyalty to the truth is an activity that is morally acceptable in the communicational relations, among them of course also in mass media communication. The truthfulness guarantees that the mass media will realise their own personalistic and social functions which means that they will direct on a good of person and a building of community.<sup>31</sup> Analysing the personalistic conception of the ethics of mass media in the light of philosophy of Karol Wojtyła, one of the above-

19 JOHN PAUL II.: *Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis*. [online]. [2015-09-08]. Available at: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\_jp-ii\_enc\_04031979\_redemptor-hominis.html>.

20 BUTTIGLIONE, R.: *Etyka w kryzysie*. Lublin : KUL, 1994, p. 116.

21 DROŹDŹ, M.: *Osoba i media. Personalistyczny paradygmat etyki mediów*. Tarnów : Biblos, 2005, p. 61-63.

22 WOJTYŁA, K.: *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht, Boston, London : D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, p. 138-139.

23 DROŹDŹ, M.: Aksjologiczne uwarunkowania prawdy. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?* Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 16.

24 DROŹDŹ, M.: Aksjologiczne uwarunkowania prawdy. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?* Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 16.

25 SALIJ OP, J.: Troska o ducha prawdy. In PUZYŃNINA, J. (ed.): *Etyka międzyludzkiej komunikacji*. Warszawa : Semper, 1993, p. 27-28.

26 SALIJ OP, J.: Troska o ducha prawdy. In PUZYŃNINA, J. (ed.): *Etyka międzyludzkiej komunikacji*. Warszawa : Semper, 1993, p. 28.

27 STYCZEŃ SDS, T.: *Wprowadzenie do etyki*. Lublin : TN KUL, 1993, p. 155.

28 WOJTYŁA, K.: *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht, Boston, London : D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, p. 170.

29 WOJTYŁA, K.: *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht, Boston, London : D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, p. 172-173.

30 DROŹDŹ, M.: Aksjologiczne uwarunkowania prawdy. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?* Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 22.

31 DROŹDŹ, M.: Aksjologiczne uwarunkowania prawdy. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?* Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 23.

mentioned authors Michał Drożdż rightly diagnoses that “activity of mass media is written in the cognition and uncovering of the truth about reality while presence of the person in the world of mass media and all his/her acts which are related to mass media should serve the recognition and transmission of the truth via mass media.”<sup>32</sup>

In one of his messages for the World Communication Day Pope John Paul II noticed, referring to a revolutionary development of mass media, that they “draw its own basic criteria from the truth of and about the human person, formed in the image of God”.<sup>33</sup> These words strongly correlate with anthropological and ethical principles which were expressed in earlier, pre-pontifical works of Karol Wojtyła. People of mass media should firstly care for the truth to serve human being and community. But the truth cannot be *selective*, cannot *kill* or *strike*; it also cannot be identified with the sensation. The truth in the mass media transmission cannot be isolated from the truth about human being as a person, about his/her dignity and freedom. That is why any information transmitted in the communicational act, among it also in mass media activity, must correspond with this ontological context – the truth about human person. Only thanks to that ‘media truth’ serves human being and supports building a real community, also community in the universal dimension as a global one.

In general the postmodern ethics relativizes the category of truth. So, in this way it denies any universalistic form of moral norms or ethical systems. If we can speak about the principle of the truth on the ground of postmodernism, it can have only a relativized and subjective form.<sup>34</sup> There is no problem of cognition of the objective truth and loyalty to it in the postmodernist ethics. We can say only about the revelation of ‘own’ truth that is a creation of reason. We can treat the truth in the category of opinion or point of view. In case of philosophy and ethics of Karol Wojtyła, an internal experience is always linked with relation to the absolute and objective truth. Also the truth about oneself can be an objective truth because it touches an objective being who is a self-experiencing subject. In the encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*, he directly expressed his objectivistic and absolutistic attitude: “Every truth—if it really is truth—presents itself as universal, even if it is not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times.”<sup>35</sup>

## Dialogue in Media Dimension

The problem of dialogical approaching to the truth is closely linked with the ethical issues of truth in the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła as well as in his pontifical teaching. John Paul II is treated as one of the most prominent Polish philosophers of dialogue. The recognition of the truth, especially regarding the truth of other and the truth about other, becomes real in the context of the Wojtyła’s philosophy of dialogue. The Pope found a source of dialogue in the human nature. That is why his philosophical reflection about the dialogue became firstly a part of his anthropology and then it was transferred on the ground of social ethics. Karol Wojtyła was convinced that despite inclinations to evil, a human being has also a great potential of good and trust. He treated a dialogue as a way of overcoming one’s own weaknesses. Thanks to dialogue we can discover true and proper aspects in human relations, also in the communicational situations. We can leave clearly subjective attitudes and opinions which lead us to the conflicts and tensions between people. Finally thanks to dialogue we can get to know the truth. The dialogue does not mean that we only avoid conflictual situations. It reveals the true nature of human being. In this way it can be a source of good.<sup>36</sup> In the encyclical letter *Ut unum sint* John Paul II stated that: “Although the concept of ‘dialogue’ might appear to give priority to the cognitive dimension (*dia-logos*), all dialogue implies a global, existential dimension. It involves the human subject in his or her entirety; dialogue between communities involves in a particular way the subjectivity of each.”<sup>37</sup>

In the dialogical relations or even only in openness and willingness to the honest dialogue, persons make a transcendence, they cross themselves, opening for the truth about other and his/her personal dignity. This attitude, if it is authentic, does not make any detriment for both sides of the dialogue as well as for the truth, because the truth about the human person excludes any instrumental and utilitarian treatment.

The essence of the dialogue in Wojtyła’s understanding appears from these anthropological assumptions. It is not a dialogue whose aim is to gain any compromise between hostile sides satisfying them less or more. It is a dialogue whose aim is the truth. It is often hard-to-gain and long-term aim. But the truth is in the centre of authentic dialogue. So, sides of the dialogue should be open not only for the consensus but for the objective truth that is a guarantor of real and stable social and international peace. Although, John Paul II was convinced that: “Truth has no fear, either, of honourable agreements, because truth brings with it the light that enables it to enter into such an agreement without sacrificing essential convictions and values. Truth causes minds to come together; it shows what already unites the parties that were previously opposed.”<sup>38</sup>

That is why dialogue is also to lead to the internal revival of human being what means to affirm the objective truth. It has to be conducted with respect to the conscience. It cannot bring an attempt of infringement or inclination of somebody’s conscience to insist on own subjective opinions. The Pope advised to be patient in the dialogue. It needs time to find the objective truth. The truth discovered in the dialogue cannot infect or crush the sides of the dialogue. The dialogue is a preparation for the affirmation of the objective truth. So, its participants should respect themselves, their cultural, social and economic otherness as well as different emotional, ethical, aesthetical and religious sensitivity. As John Paul II stated, dialogue should reveal the truth “with respect for the intelligence and consciences of others”.<sup>39</sup>

The role of mass media in this relation is concerned in their informational function. During one of his messages for the World Day of Social Communication, John Paul II clearly expressed a magnificent meaning of mass media in the dialogue. The Pope stated that comprehensive and multi-faceted information is a condition of the real dialogue. He mentioned especially the kind of dialogue that supports peace-making efforts as well as establishment of just relations in the World. Speaking about activities of mass media which contribute to the real dialogue, of course he thought firstly of their informational function as I have mentioned above; however, he did not forget also about the educational function as well as about recreational function sensitising on cultural values. This strategy assumes the complementary approach to the issue of media messages as a factor creating opportunities for the dialogue or even more for the peace-making dialogue. “It brings – in John Paul II’s understanding – a specific bond between subjects of this dialogue, the bond based on trust or as the Pope defined it as “a strategy of trust”.<sup>40</sup> Opening for the dialogue as well as for dialogical searching for the objective truth overcomes ideological and cultural barriers, because the dialogue – according to John Paul II’s vision – enables people to exist as members of a great human family as well as realise a specific, metaphysical community of persons which is a place where subjects of the dialogue meet. Ultimately it also enables to constitute a culture of dialogue that is a fundament of “the civilization of love” postulated by the Pope.<sup>41</sup> In the Pope’s opinion the authentic dialogue teaches us:

- to show respect for every human person;
- to show respect for the true values and cultures of others; respect for the legitimate autonomy and self-determination of others;
- to look beyond ourselves in order to understand and support the good of others;
- to contribute our own resources into social solidarity in the name of development and growth that come from equity and justice;

32 DROŹDŹ, M.: *Osoba i media. Personalistyczny paradygmat etyki mediów*. Tarnów: Biblos, 2005, p. 374.

33 JOHN PAUL II.: *Social Communications for a Christian Promotion of Youth. Message for the 19<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1985*. [online]. [2015-12-14]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_15041985\\_world-communications-day.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_15041985_world-communications-day.html)>.

34 BAUMAN, Z.: *Etyka ponowoczesna*. Warszawa: PWN, 1996, p. 22-23.

35 JOHN PAUL II.: *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio*. [online]. [2015-12-14]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091998\\_fides-et-ratio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html)>.

36 WOJTYŁA, K.: *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht, Boston, London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, p. 287.

37 JOHN PAUL II.: *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint*. [online]. [2015-12-17]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html)>.

38 JOHN PAUL II.: *Truth, the Power of Peace. Message for the Celebration of the Day of Peace, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1980*. [online]. [2015-12-18]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19791208\\_xiii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19791208_xiii-world-day-for-peace.html)>.

39 JOHN PAUL II.: *Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*. [online]. [2015-12-18]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_02121984\\_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html)>.

40 JOHN PAUL II.: *Social Communication at the Service of Justice and Peace. Message for the 21<sup>st</sup> World Communications Day, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1987*. [online]. [2015-12-19]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_24011987\\_world-communications-day.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_24011987_world-communications-day.html)>.

41 JOHN PAUL II.: *Peace is a Value with no Frontiers North-South, East-West: Only One Peace, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1986*. [online]. [2015-12-20]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19851208\\_xix-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19851208_xix-world-day-for-peace.html)>.

- to build the structures that will ensure that social solidarity and dialogue are permanent features of the world we live in.<sup>42</sup>

Mass media as an instrument of social communications enable dialogue between people. They can find themselves in the dialogue as persons gifted with the same personal dignity. But we have to acknowledge that the mass media cannot cover the person. We do not dialogue “with the written page, or the stage, or the small or large screen” but with personal being, with each other. Media are only tools which make opportunities for promotion and popularisation of dialogue, for overcoming physical borders.<sup>43</sup> The sense of these statements means that the media space ought to be free from negative intentions. People should not use mass media “against someone” or “against something”. They rather should “work for and with others” through mass media. Thanks to using of techno-sphere, especially the Internet, this mass media dialogue can become a real universal.<sup>44</sup> Mass media, because of their “meditational” nature, are a communication channel in the dialogue or more in the so-called *polilogue*, where many sides (subjects) participate in the meditational opening for the truth and arguments of others.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusions

The words of John Paul II got a proper meaning in the confrontation with political and international reality which we can read or watch in mass media transmission nowadays. Mass media, which are treated in an instrumental way without personalistic references, often become tools of propaganda. The mission of searching for the truth and proclamation of the truth loses with cynicism that makes particular interest a fundamental principle of social relations. Then the role of mass media is reduced to the propaganda function and searching for the truth is superseded by a substantiation of decisions and activities of political subjects. People of mass media have to be careful because the line between the absolute and objective truth and its degeneration, i.e. *total truth*, is thin.<sup>46</sup> This kind of ‘truth’ is characteristic especially for totalitarian systems and ideologies but it also can appear in a democratic world; it is a form of relativism that is promoted as an absolute and sole truth. Specific mentality accompanies this ‘truth’. From the searchers of the truth people become its owners. Self-confidence, individual or collective, violates the modest attitude of the searcher of the truth. People are then monopolists of the truth. They do not need a dialogue because it helps find the truth as John Paul II convinced. So, if mass media reject the dialogue, they may become a propagator of monologue that reveals only a relativized form of the truth which can be transformed into the “total truth”. John Paul II seemed to see this danger. However, we can find opinions claiming that he was not a man of dialogue in real life; although he declared the value of dialogue, he insisted on his point of view. It is an interesting aspect suitable for a psychological analysis of the Pope but my role is only to describe and interpret his philosophy and pontifical teaching. I am rather a historian of ideas than a critic. From my point of view, his ethical and anthropological reflection focusing on mass media can be inspiring for interpreters of his philosophy as well as for people of mass media and their audiences. This applied ethics teaches us that mass media have to serve a person, searching for the objective truth that is an elementary principle of mass media and using the dialogue that is the best way of finding the truth and discovering an internal richness of other person.

42 JOHN PAUL II.: *Peace is a Value with no Frontiers North-South, East-West: Only One Peace, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1986*. [online]. [2015-12-20]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19851208\\_xix-world-day-for-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19851208_xix-world-day-for-peace.html)>.

43 JOHN PAUL II.: *Social Communication: Instruments of Encounter between Faith and Culture. Message for 18<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1984*. [online]. [2015-12-20]. Available at: <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_24051984\\_world-communications-day.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_24051984_world-communications-day.html)>; DROŹDŹ, M.: *Osoba i media. Personalistyczny paradygmat etyki mediów*. Tarnów: Biblos, 2005, p. 128-129.

44 GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Influence of the Internet on the Cognitive Abilities of Man. Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Approach. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 7.

45 DROŹDŹ, M.: Wartość mediacyjna mediów. In BACZYŃSKI, A., DROŹDŹ, M., (eds.): *Wartość mediów: od wyzwań do szans*. Tarnów: Biblos, 2012, p. 25.

46 MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: The New Empire of Lies? Essay on the Lack of Truth in International Relations. In *European Journal of Transformation Studies*, 2014, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 119.

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