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MICHAEL NOVAK'S SPIRIT OF DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM VERSUS THE SPIRIT OF CATHOLICISM. CRITICAL EVALUATION

1. Introduction

The article relates to the book by Michael Novak *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. This article has already been published by me in Polish in 2016¹. However, due to the great interest in it from English-speaking countries, I decided to publish it in English in a slightly extended version compared to the previous one. The most intriguing thing about the book is the word combination of 'spirit' and 'democratic capitalism'. We obviously do not intend in the following article to conduct lexicological analysis of the blend of words embedded in the title of the book under consideration. The article refreshes the cultural text written by Novak and analyses it in six new aspects, which have not yet been explored sufficiently in the literature. On the one hand, the article analysis the notion of the 'spirit', which is discussed by Novak in his work. On the other hand, however, by utilizing the comparative method in the text (scientific synthesis method), it aims to discover if there really exists any compatibility between the 'spirit of democratic capitalism' and the 'spirit of Catholicism', or if there is a gap between them. The original comparison between the 'spirit of capitalism' and the 'spirit of Catholicism' included in the text, does not only stand out from other Novak's commentators, but it can also prove useful for undertaking the discussion with the subject under consideration.

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¹ W. Świątkowski, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu Michaela Novaka. Jego analiza i ocena w kontekście etyki chrześcijańskiej*, „Annales. Etyka w Życiu Gospodarczym” 19(2019), nr 3, p. 73–84.

2. Contradictory pneumatological determinants

In his book, Novak foremostly complains that throughout the past centuries the Catholic Church did not reveal the intend of cooperation with the emerging, mainly in Great Britain and the United States, ‘new spirit of capitalism’² – after the work of Adam Smith under the title *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* published in 1776. This spirit is not only, as Novak emphasizes, a rigid free-market variant, but also, based on John Locke’s philosophical postulates, a deeply cultural-democratic one, in which religion, unlike the “old spirit” of autocratic governments in many countries of the world, could enjoy freedom and free people could take matters into their own hands³. Above all, the Catholic Church did not understand those moral and cultural roots of the New Economics and in a doctrinal manner (in many papal documents) tried ‘to extinguish the freshly inflamed fire’ of civilization changes⁴. Novak writes that the Church, remaining outside, *did not give encouragement; attached to the past, he did not bless the new order with the same combination of critical detachment and benevolent hope, which he once inspired the feudal system, guilds and urban organizations of medieval Europe*⁵. John Paul II as the first one, in his encyclical ‘*Laborem exercens*’ (1981) – published in the ninety anniversary of ‘*Rerum novarum*’ of Leon XIII – emphasized ‘the creativity of modern labor by making use of theological symbols of the Creator and His creation’⁶. According to Novak, by doing so, he made a huge step towards the tradition of John Locke and Adam Smith and a latest democratic capitalism⁷. However, this statement is a far going simplification, which was also admitted by Novak in his further sentence that John Paul II used the historical overview of the nineteenth century capitalism only to illustrate his deduction and not in order to look at or prove the convergence of the Catholic and liberal social thought⁸. Nevertheless, Novak inspired by the Pope’s encyclical ‘*Laborem exercens*’, one year later (1982), published his work *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, which was dedicated to John Paul II. Perhaps he counted on the fact that this thinker, who came from the communist world (similarly to Novak’s family whose roots were in Slovakia), shall appreciate, to a greater extent than his predecessors, the values deriving from democratic capitalism. This way of thinking presented by Novak can be proved by one of the following statements pronounced by him: “[...] Perhaps there are some gaps in the Catholic preaching about economics? Maybe it lacks some observations? These kind of reflections led me throughout the years to the conclusion that in the same way as the Catholic tradition can teach something America, the American democratic capitalism is able to add

² M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, tłum. T. Stanek, Poznań 2001, p. 30.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 30–31.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 286.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem.

some new solutions to the Catholic tradition. Up to this moment, the Catholic Church used the knowledge derived from Greece and Rome, Germany and France. So why not from America?"⁹

At the same time, the papal criticism for full liberalism, including particular signs of social pathology (among others, unemployment, lack of social solidarity etc.), is still deeply investigated in the consecutive encyclicals: 'Sollicitudo rei socialis' (1987) and 'Centesimus annus' (1991).

The unquestionable fact is that capitalism at the beginning of e.g. the United States, as was noticed by Alexis de Tocqueville, unleashed the spirit of initiative and creativity among millions of people. They felt obliged to build their own world, irrespective of social position or sex¹⁰. This spirit of entrepreneurship and taking matters into own hands that lie in every person, led with time not only to the improvement in individual or family wellbeing, but also to material and technological development of the society. Thus, if we had to assess this spirit only in a purely pragmatic dimension, it would herald many good things. What is more, Novak is certain that this spirit is more compatible with lofty goals (e.g. with self-reform) of Christianity than the practice of any other system¹¹. He is therefore surprised that the Catholic Church has not yet been able to understand its essence¹². However, if we consider this spirit within the frames of democratic capitalism i.e.: doctrinally rooted into evolutionary and biological view of the British empiricism (Th. Hobbes, J. Locke, J.S. Mill, A. Smith) or to a certain extent American pragmatism stemming from it (W. James), Novak considers it (i.e. the spirit) most of all in this context – as opposed to Max Weber, who beforehand analyzed 'the spirit of capitalism' in a broad connections with protestant and puritan mentality (and especially Calvinism); it is therefore important to add that due to the aforementioned causes, it cannot be about expressing this spirit in the sense of its connection with the Absolute or Theology of Epiphany (Catholicism), or in a category of religious argument of Weber. It concerns the expression of his individual challenges – which were closer to the 'state of nature' – with which the first settlers in the territories later (since the declaration of independence) of the United States had to struggle, rather than strictly religious dilemmas. Due to this, not only religious issues, but also the situation in which the first settlers found themselves in, after the discovery of America, liberated in them the need for individual freedom and creativity, which constitutes the essence (and the beginning) of capitalism discussed by Novak. Therefore, it is not strange that the liberal beliefs of Locke about the right to civil freedom, being the reflection of pluralistic reality of 'the state of nature', ideally matched with the beginnings of American capitalism and inspired Thomas Jefferson to write the aforementioned Declaration of Independence of 1776¹³.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 290.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 112.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 282.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ D.B. Ingram, J.A. Parks, *Etyka dla żółtodziobów, czyli wszystko, co powinieneś wiedzieć o...*, tłum. R. Bartoń, Poznań 2003, p. 141.

In the sense, the situation described above unleashed, to a certain extent, some invisible and inadvertent forces (A. Smith), which is closer to the Hobbes' 'civil theologies'¹⁴ than the pneumatological determinants in the Catholic dogma¹⁵.

3. The capitalist system versus the ecclesiological system

Novak is searching for some kind of convergence between the democratic capitalism and ecclesiological systems¹⁶, within which the forces of spirit are being liberated; so that particular individuals can recognize and develop their talents. What is this spirit then? Above all, the spirit of Catholicism cannot be treated only as some metaphoric phraseology, but is 'the Spirit of the Lord' (Lk 4, 18) linked with sacramental arrangement of the Church¹⁷. In contrast to the unintended consequences of democratic capitalism (Smith), the spirit of Catholicism is most intentional, both at the level of personal moral renewal and in examining the signs of the times and explaining them in the light of the Gospel, so that the Church can meet current and future religious and social challenges¹⁸. When the spirit of democratic capitalism does not lead to elimination of the structures of evil, such as social inequalities¹⁹, but relies only on restoring the original faith in self-sufficiency and creativity of individuals; the spirit of Catholicism is the first to illuminate everything with a new light and reveals to man God's plan for renewal²⁰: overcoming sin, building evangelical values such as justice, solidarity (love) in relationships with one another and the correct recognition of the meaning and purpose of one's activity (vocation). What is more, in Novak's democratic capitalism there is a need for 'a system as a system', which is the one that liberates and enables the activity of a spirit²¹; the activity of the spirit of Catholicism, however, can be noticed among all the people of good will. That is, people who are not connected with ecclesiological institutionalism, but who obey the moral law every day, which resounds in their hearts with the command: 'Do this, avoid that' and care about the search for truth and goodness²². It follows that the Spirit of the Lord acts freely, even outside the ecclesiological institutionalism, and that he was already active at the beginning of creation (Gen 1, 2). He simply works through reading and

¹⁴ J. Staniszkis, *Antropologia władzy. Między Traktatem Lizbońskim a kryzysem*, Warszawa 2009, p. 212–213, 230.

¹⁵ B. Drożdż, *Posługa społeczna Kościoła. Studium pastoralne w świetle nauczania współczesnego Kościoła*, Legnica 2009, p. 113.

¹⁶ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 282.

¹⁷ B. Drożdż, *Posługa społeczna Kościoła...*, p. 112.

¹⁸ Sobór Watykański II, 'Gaudium et spes', no. 4, 5, 6, 7; W. Świątkowski, *Das Beziehungsgefüge von Sünde und Schuld auf dem Hintergrund der Konzilsaussagen des Vaticanum II*, „Episteme” 43(2005), p. 66–68.

¹⁹ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 105.

²⁰ 'Gaudium et spes', no. 11.

²¹ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 105.

²² 'Gaudium et spes', no. 16.

acting in life according to the natural law, which in Christian ethics, due to the Act of Creation, is the natural participation of a person (being unconscious of this work) in the Absolute²³. That is why, we may speak about the manifold work of the Spirit, which through the inner voice of conscience (moral law) not only joins the Christians with the rest of people but also leads them jointly to search for the truth and truthfully solves 'as many moral problems as may happen in lives of individuals and in social coexistence'²⁴. Therefore, if we want to speak about the creative dimension of the spirit of Catholicism's activity, we should know that it is based on constantly deeper search for the truth²⁵. And the essence of this truth is, as Benedict XVI says, that 'The Spirit does not introduce anything different or new, which would lie beyond Christ', person's renewal, who then directs himself and all the entrusted creation into the final transcendence. On the other hand, in democratic capitalism described by Novak, it is not the spirit which initiates the renewal of a person and the entrusted world, but it is the existing capitalistic system as a system, as I mentioned before, which liberates it and enables it to act²⁶. In order to be correctly understood, it is important to state that capitalistic system mentioned by Novak is not something (contrarily to the socialist system) structurally planned and intentional. On the contrary, it is the 'poststructural' reality²⁷, as it was called by German philosopher Burghart Schmidt. That is, placing man and his freedom in the liberal vision of the state of nature, founded by Hobbes and extended by Locke, in which people are subject only to the law of nature, by virtue of which they are free and equal, and where there is natural flexibility and mobility in search of self-sufficiency necessary for survival. Consequently, it means that the spirit of democratic capitalism can act fully only by negating all the forms of structure as well as traditional (i.e. relating to Greek and Latin philosophy) axiological complexity. In this way, this spirit takes man back, so that he can then begin anew (*tabula rasa*) his cycle of growth and formation of values. The spirit of Catholicism, however, directs towards transcendental future and gathers ecclesiological community from all the cultures and languages. However, in his work, Novak strongly sensitizes to the importance of the democratic 'system as a system', which for him is the only one that allows free coordination of freedom, and provides immediate protection against any hostile attempts at comprehensive (complex) argumentation. This is also where the central problem of liberalism appears, in which, as Schmidt says, the utopian image of the natural state even grows to the 'status of a sacred image'²⁸.

²³ J. Staniszkis, *Antropologia władzy...*, p. 153.

²⁴ 'Gaudium et spes', no. 16.

²⁵ B. Drożdż, *Postuga społeczna Kościoła...*, p. 113.

²⁶ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 105.

²⁷ G. Raulet, *Filozofia niemiecka po 1945*, tłum. A. Dziadek, Warszawa 2013, p. 362.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 363.

4. Acts of exchange, financialization and values

The third aspect of the spirit of democratic capitalism is the fact that according to Locke and Smith, to whom Novak relates to, it focuses mostly on individual acts of exchange²⁹. And only in this kind of system in which people do not think about the tradition of institutions and norms, but about stimulation of individuals as an expression of anthropologic need for 'taking matters into own hands', we can speak about the spirit of democratic capitalism³⁰. Therefore, the next feature of this spirit are not, as in Catholicism, universal values, which it favors and to which it leads, but the individual acts of exchange³¹. These acts are individual preferences and relate to the exchange between goods. It means that this spirit does not inquire about the essence of goods, i.e. who stands behind the goods, or how much effort it took to produce them³² – which would indicate the deeper, personal explanation of the value of work, which was mentioned by John Paul II in his encyclical 'Laborem exercens' – but only about the exchange of value between the goods. It can be therefore stated that the values in neoclassical economics are not understood in the subject as a moral law (due to the act of creation), but in the object as a moral substrate of exchange³³. Secondly, it means that if we perceive the values in this way, we can speak about creating the values. According to Smith, it is being conducted not only in every form of industry and on every level of production, but most of all due to the constantly wider division of work³⁴. Consequently, it should introduce the added value on the market and due to this increase the efficiency of exchange. Thirdly, in the same way, when we ask, what is the measure of the true value of things? While in Christian ethics the subject is placed before the thing, i.e. the work is connected with the person behind it, the later nineteenth-century neoclassical economists William Stanley Jevons, the Austrian Carl Menger and the Swiss Léon Walras considered the price, expressed in money, as a measure of the value of each thing³⁵. The main focus on price has led the spirit of democratic capitalism to behave as if the person in production essentially did not exist at all. In the same way, the valuation of the very orders of things, when we speak of 'higher' or 'lower' values, takes place here not in the manner of ethical hierarchization (Max Scheler), but only in the way of free-market exchange³⁶ and is ultimately expressed in the monetized

²⁹ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 115.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 176.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 115.

³² R. Patel, *Wartość niczego. Jak przekształcić społeczeństwo rynkowe i na nowo zdefiniować demokrację*, tłum. H. Jankowska, Warszawa 2010, p. 81.

³³ P.L. Danner, *Personalizm, wartości, ekonomia*, w: *Religia i ekonomia*, pod red. i tłum. J. Grosfelda, Warszawa 1989, p. 29.

³⁴ Ibidem, 30.

³⁵ R. Patel, *Wartość niczego...*, p. 81.

³⁶ K.E. Boulding, *O przydatności ekonomii dla teologii i religii*, w: *Religia i ekonomia*, pod red. i tłum. J. Grosfelda, Warszawa 1989, p. 19.

value of goods³⁷. Evaluation, then, consists only in choosing the 'best' situation utilitarianly³⁸ and obtaining the highest possible price. Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899–1990) showed that money took the place of the person and began to live its own life as financial capital³⁹. According to Sohn-Rethel this is how money economics in its abstract independence was born here⁴⁰. Sohn-Rethel writes: 'Money is an abstract vector that makes all the socio-economic conditions without which exchange could not take place hidden. Money transforms real reification into an abstract thing, the genesis of which becomes invisible, in which we can see both the source and the testimony of the effectiveness of ideology, which is not only a false representation but also a constitutive structure of thinking'⁴¹.

Thus, the spirit of democratic capitalism did not penetrate into the above-mentioned genesis of the manufactured commodity (who is actually behind it) or into the issues of justice and responsibility, especially towards people from third countries, where profits are often generated, but it skillfully moved from production to finance⁴². And this financialization of labor has led, after all, to the commodification of human thought⁴³. In this financializing version of the spirit of democratic capitalism, in order to obtain a certain payment (benefit), man began to expose himself as a product on the global market of 'consumer vanity', and sometimes – in the case of poorer countries – a necessity of life⁴⁴. While the spirit of Catholicism emphasizes the ethical condition and the subjectivity of work in the fulfillment of personal development⁴⁵, financialization favors the post-Catholicization creation of humanity for purely utilitarian use.

5. Pluralism of the spirit of capitalism and the truth

The fourth aspect of the spirit of democratic capitalism is that it does not only strive towards the constantly bigger economic freedom, but also in the ethical dimension, it breaks down the universal concepts of modernism by means of pluralization⁴⁶. It means that the spirit placed in the vision of the natural state takes a postmodern attitude towards the great universal concepts of modernism. First, in the empirical conception of the state of nature, one is not dealing with

³⁷ C. Harman, *Kapitalizm zombi. Globalny kryzys i aktualność myśli Marksa*, tłum. H. Janowska, Warszawa 2011, p. 46–47.

³⁸ K.E. Boulding, *O przydatności ekonomii dla teologii i religii*, p. 19.

³⁹ R. Patel, *Wartość niczego...*, p. 85.

⁴⁰ G. Raullet, *Filozofia niemiecka...*, p. 383.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 384–385; A. Sohn-Rethel, *Warenform und Denkform. Versuch einer Analyse des gesellschaftlichen Ursprungs des „Reiner Verstandes“*, Wien 1961.

⁴² Papieska Rada „Iustitia et Pax”, *Powołanie lidera biznesu*, tłum. H. Zieleźnik, Kraków 2012, p. 21.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ U. Wolska, *Terapia filozoficzna od umiłowania mądrości do dobrego i spełnionego życia*, t. 1, Warszawa 2019, p. 46.

⁴⁵ Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika 'Laborem Exercens' o pracy ludzkiej*, Kraków 1981, no. 6.

⁴⁶ A. Anzenbacher, *Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, tłum. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 2005, p. 217.

complex or comprehensive systems, but, as Smith used to say, with a natural tendency to exchange⁴⁷, which is a reflection of the primordial – undisturbed – pluralization of life. Therefore, according to A. Rand and Novak, this primary pluralization is the only ‘substantial-spiritual’ or objective value of the ‘natural subject’⁴⁸. The cooperation between people is not conducted according to the common universal systems of values or systems of beliefs, but within the exchange as one objective value⁴⁹, which is not imposed, but is competitive⁵⁰.

Secondly, the spirit of democratic capitalism does not lead to knowledge of the truth or building communities around the truth, as is the case in the concept of Christian ethics, but is an expression of abstraction and a strong form of individualism. The ‘natural subject’ – the man of the state of nature – does not rise above his own individualism by adapting himself to a universal system of values⁵¹, but on the contrary: he derives his identity and freedom from pluralistic forms of uniqueness as the only accepted principle of life⁵². Thereby, the spirit of democratic capitalism grows on the basis of Locke’s philosophy, where democratic means the same as pluralistic. Therefore, if we take the opinion of German ethicist J. Gründel, it is the form of a negative pluralism⁵³, which on every stage of management does not lead to a common denominator⁵⁴. The concepts of complexity as well as the notion of ‘the common good’ or even the stipulated character of the Hobbes’ state – in the dimension of this spirit – are the phrases that according to A. Rand are deprived of sense, ‘unless they are understood in the way that it is about the sum of assets belonging to all the individuals existing in the particular context’⁵⁵. The expressions such as ‘common good’ are used, according to Rand, within the democratic capitalism not in a Thomistic sense, but exactly due to a flexible, indefinite and mystical character of its activity. It allows the common value of pluralism to be preserved not as a search for a common meaning and purpose, but as an ‘excuse’ from everything that is comprehensive⁵⁶. Therefore, the essence of this spirit is a radical pluralism. It means that this spirit favors only the postmodern forms for life, which exist on the principle of an exchange without the claim for exclusiveness⁵⁷. In the sense, the spirit of democratic capitalism, in order not to succumb to the temptation of any romantic or constructivist rehabilitation of ‘the whole’, puts emphasis on the idea of dialectics, which defends arbitrary multitude, as it was

⁴⁷ K. Zorde, *Metafizyczne wątki w ekonomii*, Warszawa 2004, p. 20.

⁴⁸ B. Schmidt, w: G. Raullet, *Filozofia niemiecka...*, p. 360.

⁴⁹ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 87.

⁵⁰ A. Rand, *Kapitalizm. Nieznany ideał*, tłum. J. Łoziński, Poznań 2013, p. 13–37.

⁵¹ ‘Gaudium et spes’, no. 16.

⁵² G. Raullet, *Filozofia niemiecka...*, p. 360–363.

⁵³ J. Gründel, *Normen im Wandel. Eine Orientierungshilfe für christliches Leben heute*, München 1984, p. 124–125.

⁵⁴ A. Rand, *Kapitalizm...*, p. 37.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 28–29.

⁵⁷ A. Anzenbacher, *Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, p. 217.

called by Hobbes – ‘civil theology’⁵⁸. Therefore, it is a subjectivistic concept of a spirit, where the difference between subjective and objective moment is of no significance.

Thirdly, the foundation of the philosophy of pluralism that Novak speaks of is free competition (exchange), which also includes the freedom of this spirit; which in effect means that this spirit is nothing more than a reflection of individual acts of evaluation. These acts have, as K. Zorde emphasizes, a kind of metaphysical (non-economic) – ‘spiritual’ expression⁵⁹. It is important to add that this ‘metaphysics’ in an empirical model or pragmatism is not something which remains independent of the world of senses, but quite on the contrary, it is the internal state of consciousness that is only the reflection of sensory perception⁶⁰. It is a mechanism for associating free-market opportunities, about which we sometimes do not know where they come from, or what their subject (perpetrator) is⁶¹. Due to this, the spirit makes choices in an unintended manner (least expected) and can improve human’s existence only in the context of unrestricted economic freedom⁶². Any trials of economic systems institutionalization are therefore destructive for the spirit of democratic capitalism. In such a case, according to Novak’s views, we may have more to do with knowledge (tradition) than with the freedom and strength of this spirit.

6. The initial sympathy of the spirit

The fifth mark of the spirit of democratic capitalism is the original sympathy. In ‘The Theory of Moral Sentiments’, Smith outlined the virtues of sympathy as the ability to empathize with the needs of others. Sympathy – as he wrote – ‘is a spontaneous moral emotion; it springs unexpectedly when a person suddenly starts realizing the sufferings and sorrows of another human being’⁶³. At first glance, it may seem that sympathy is connected with morality. However, a more deeper insight into sympathy described by Smith helps to understand the essence of it better. If we assume that morality according to Socrates or Kant is linked with the mind, in case of Smith it is quite on the contrary: ‘the spontaneous outbreak of sympathy must take control over the will: a person is overtaken by such huge emotions that are impossible to control as when we suddenly begin to understand people who lost something or somebody, when we feel pity for notorious liars or cowards. The outbreak of sympathy throws us beyond normal moral boundaries, in the sphere of spontaneous time. There is nothing

⁵⁸ J. Staniszkis, *Antropologia władzy...*, p. 230.

⁵⁹ K. Zorde, *Metafizyczne wątki w ekonomii*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ A. Anzenbacher, *Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, p. 141.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 141–142.

⁶² M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 111.

⁶³ R. Sennett, *Korozja charakteru. Osobiste konsekwencje pracy w nowym kapitalizmie*, tłum. J. Dzierzowski, Ł. Mikołajewski, Warszawa 2006, p. 43.

routine in sympathy, nothing that can be foreseen⁶⁴, and nothing that can stay in accordance with the obligations towards conscience.

Another issue is the 'dictate of conscience', including the return of substantial morality, as well as institutionalism and routine, which, according to Smith's views, would put a dam on the original sympathy⁶⁵. The existing system of democratic capitalism as a system enables – in Novak's line of reasoning – so to say on every step, the spontaneous explosion of sympathy, which is an essential characteristic of this capitalistic spirit. On one hand, the development of the spirit is possible only in the existing and approved system of change and flexibility; Smith was sure that any institutionality and routine may kill it⁶⁶. On the other hand, however, the initial principle of the spirit is a relationality of exchange (trade), which cannot exist without sympathy. In other words: sympathy creates and reflects always the individual character of exchange⁶⁷, which – thanks to it – under conditions of free competition, transforms itself into objective convergence of interests, so exactly into a social benefit understood in an utilitarian manner⁶⁸.

Sympathy rises above the primitive egoism of Hobbes; however, Smith does not identify it, according to R. Sennett, with moral progress (or moral rule), but only with the material development of a society⁶⁹. In this sense, Smith by pushing morality aside, laid the foundations for the concept of spontaneously acting *homo oeconomicus*⁷⁰. In the Anglo-Saxon culture, the contradiction between ethical and economic acting goals started growing. Even the penetration of utilitarianism into economics, as a result of which, as Władysław Tatarkiewicz says, a specific Anglo-Saxon form of liberalism was created⁷¹, did not abolish the contradiction signaled above, because both utilitarianism and economics are as if non-subjective forms. This means that they are focused only on the objective effect of human activity, where, among other things, the conflict of conscience or the will of the subject, as considered by Christian ethics, do not matter. Simply, the correctness of actions is no longer determined by intentions and beliefs, but only by the empirically occurring and calculated (after the fact) mathematical utilitarian rule of maximization. Therefore, it can be assumed that mathematics won against religion in its moral variant⁷².

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 44.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 43.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 36–40.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 44.

⁶⁸ A. Comte-Sponville, *Czy kapitalizm jest moralny? O niedorzecznościach i tyranii naszych czasów*, tłum. E. Aduszkiewicz, Warszawa 2012, p. 116.

⁶⁹ R. Sennett, *Korozja charakteru...*, p. 44.

⁷⁰ A. Zadroga, *Współczesne ujęcia etyki biznesu w Polsce. Próba oceny z perspektywy teologii moralnej*, Lublin 2009, p. 44.

⁷¹ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, t. 2, Warszawa 2005, p. 230.

⁷² A. Krzyżanowski, *Chrześcijańska moralność polityczna. Wybór pism*, wyboru dokonał M. Kuniński, Kraków 2002, p. 199–200.

7. The spirit of time and the spirit of the world

Finally, the sixth aspect of the spirit of democratic capitalism is its closure in the world. It is true that this spirit possesses a dynamic character, but its dynamics finishes once mathematical maximization, as a good understood in a utilitarian manner, starts existing. Eventually, it means that this spirit, on one hand, is not able to and does not even intend to transcend a person – as it takes place in Christian ethics – towards higher absolute values; on the other hand, this spirit in the final stage of its growth as maximization is still locked in immanence. It is empirically perceptible in order to then, in the event of an economic downturn, start its cycle of development anew. If then, among others, the Catholic Church protests against the spreading spirit of individualism⁷³, which was mentioned by Novak, it is not because it does not appreciate its creative side, but precisely due to that it is solely placed in immanence. Due to this, among others, B. Häring distinguishes between ‘the spirit of time’ and ‘the spirit of the world’⁷⁴. According to him, ‘the spirit of time’ indicates the dynamic and integral character of human nature’s development – which constitutes a unity of spirit and body that is directed for living in time, but it is not a relationship of complete subordination or exclusion of its transcendence towards the world⁷⁵. ‘The spirit of the world’, on the other hand, is perceived to be totally directed towards the world as an expression of practical materialism, from which St. Paul warned the Christians in the Epistle to the Romans by writing: ‘Do not be conformed to this world’ (12, 2)⁷⁶. Therefore, it can be claimed that the spirit of democratic capitalism described by Novak – on the basis of Locke and Smith’s views – does not lead a person to salvation, but it is a progress that leads to the consolidation of *homo oeconomicus*. That is why, this spirit together with its utilitarian content cannot be anything else except for ‘the spirit of the world’.

8. Conclusions

The above article with the six aspects analyzed by us, dampens Novak’s enthusiasm as if between his spirit of democratic capitalism and the spirit of Catholicism existed some identified correlation. And although the spirit described by Novak is used only as a sort of a sign or a metaphor, it is true that under this notion we aimed to indicate something more than just a sign – its essence and also the distinctness of goals between the two spirits. Obviously, it is not our intention to once again enumerate the specific conclusions included in the text, however, at least two of them should be particularly investigated at the end.

⁷³ M. Novak, *Duch demokratycznego kapitalizmu*, p. 30.

⁷⁴ B. Häring, *Moralverkündigung nach dem Konzil*, w: *Theologische Brennpunkte*, ed. V. Schurr i B. Häring, Bergen-Enkheim b. Frankfurt a. M. 1966, p. 21–22.

⁷⁵ S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek a społeczność. Zarys filozofii społecznej*, Lublin 2005, p. 128–129.

⁷⁶ W. Świątkowski, *Das Beziehungsgefüge...*, p. 68–69.

Firstly, there should be no ambiguity here that Novak's spirit of democratic capitalism pays only attention to the liberal variant and does not go beyond it (cf. *Pluralism of the spirit of capitalism*). Finally, this spirit leads to – which was emphasized in the part *The spirit of time and the spirit of the world* – the consolidation of *homo oeconomicus* and due to this can be more associated with the 'spirit of the world' than with the transcendence of the spirit of Catholicism. In this context – the comparative method used by us between the spirit of democratic capitalism and the spirit of Catholicism – probably enables us to look more critically at the issues of the constantly growing (economic) globalization and so raise the question for its soundness and sense. Therefore, it seems that the article can prove useful and encourage researchers and people responsible for economics and politics to conduct constructive polemic – in the questions about the very notion of globalization.

Secondly, Novak in his 'cult' text *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* uses almost everything, i.e. – apart from postmodern dimension of pure economics – also the elements of religion, theology and Christian ethics and places it into one 'basket' with a careless manner of narration. All of it can reduce the essential conceptual difference of both of the spirits. When we forget about the metaphysics of the spirit of Catholicism, then the manner of narration used by Novak can lead more to nihilism than to openness in searching for the truth – which is close to the spirit of Catholicism – and can consequently result in solving in truth (also due to openness for conscience) moral and social problems, which are present either in individuals' lives as well as in social and economic coexistence. Our article surely serves to avoid such ambiguities. If we then want to speak about any possible connection between the spirit of capitalism and the spirit of Catholicism, it must surely be not done in the formula of 'appropriateness', where the spirit of Catholicism is a sort of contiguous to maintain and protect unconditioned narration of the spirit of capitalism – obviously embedded in the temporal (immanent) life dimension, but rather contrarily to 'appropriateness', where the spirit of capitalism – in its creativity – produces those values (timeless) and which are also praised by the spirit of Catholicism. Therefore – as can be concluded from the presented comparative analysis – the essence of the spirit of capitalism and the spirit of Catholicism cannot be reduced to the common denominator. The issue of discrepancy between the spirit of capitalism and the spirit of Catholicism will probably still remain; however, maybe not as a rigid separation or by underestimating the merits of the spirit of democratic capitalism, but in the sense of the aforementioned transcendence of the spirit of Catholicism. Whether the issue of this 'discrepancy' ultimately remains or whether it can eventually be 'overcome' or even better – 'synchronized', shall probably depend on further research and authentic interdisciplinary dialog between classical economics and Catholic ethics (religion).

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**MICHAEL NOVAK'S SPIRIT OF DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM
VERSUS THE SPIRIT OF CATHOLICISM. CRITICAL EVALUATION**

SUMMARY

In his iconic book *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, Novak, among other things, complains that for the past centuries the Catholic Church has not revealed its intention to cooperate with the emerging, mainly in Britain and the United States, 'new spirit of capitalism' – following Adam

Smith's work published in 1776, entitled *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Above all, the Catholic Church was said, Novak writes, to have failed to understand these moral and cultural roots of the New Economy and doctrinally (in many papal documents) even sought to 'extinguish the freshly lit fire' of civilisational change. Novak writes that the Church, while remaining on the outside, did not offer encouragement; tied to the past, it did not bless the new order with the same combination of critical distance and benevolent hope that the feudal system, guilds and urban organisations of medieval Europe once inspired. It was not until John Paul II was the first of the Popes, in his encyclical 'Laborem exercens' (1981) – published on the ninetieth anniversary of Leo XIII's 'Rerum novarum' – to emphasise 'the creativity of modern work through the use of theological symbols of the Creator and His creation'. In doing so, he took, in Novak's view, a huge step into the tradition of John Locke and Adam Smith and more recent democratic capitalism.

In the six aspects analysed, the article seeks to demonstrate whether there is indeed any recognisable convergence between the 'spirit of democratic capitalism' and the 'spirit of Catholicism', or whether there is a gulf between them? Using a comparative method between the two aforementioned conceptions of 'spirit' (the method of scientific synthesis), the article thus aims to attempt to answer the above question. The original comparison between the 'spirit of capitalism' and the 'spirit of Catholicism' contained in the text may also prove useful for engaging in an interdisciplinary discussion on the meaningfulness and desirability of economic globalisation.

KEYWORDS: utilitarianism, values, free market, pluralism, truth