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## **Woman, Self-Giving and Receiving: New Feminism, Theology of the Body, and Society<sup>1</sup>**

Towards the end of his book *Dependent Rational Animals. Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* Alasdair MacIntyre claims that in a certain aspect men should become more like women<sup>2</sup>. The aspect he talks about is the particularly female awareness of the human dependence on others, or, as one might say, human relationality. Doing my research on the theoretical arguments developed by the so called new feminists, who rely on theology of the body<sup>3</sup> (commonly called TOB for short in English-speaking circles) and theology of woman developed by John Paul II as well as the traditional metaphysics, I noticed some points of similarity with the critique of individualist modernity raised by MacIntyre. The new feminists like Michele M. Schumacher, Mary F. Rousseau, Janne Haaland Matlary, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and others portrait the relational human subject: the person within the network of communal relations and the community oriented towards the achievement of the common good, the realization of which is the fulfilment of personal development. The emphasis put on the importance of human relations based on love necessarily involving

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally presented at the “Theology of the Body” International Symposium organized at the Athenaeum Pontificium Regina Apostolorum in Rome, Italy, which was held November 9–11, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals. Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, London 1999, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich. Odkupienie ciała a sakramentalność małżeństwa*, Città del Vaticano 1986. (English version: John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them. A Theology of The Body*, transl. M. Waldstein, Boston 2006).

the objective good of the person comes from the assumption of the realist philosophical consideration of the human nature (order of being precedes and determines the order of acting; beings have essences to be realized; goods, including the common good, are objective; beings strive towards their perfection) as well as the theological arguments coming from John Paul II and the Catholic tradition. Both sources of the new feminist argumentation: natural and theological, point to certain particularly female awareness of and openness to personal relations of ecstatic character (in the meaning of the term “ecstasy” used by Karol Wojtyła<sup>4</sup> and Graham J. McAleer<sup>5</sup>, namely being open and devoted to others, “going out of oneself” to reach out in love towards the other by giving oneself towards the other, which can also be called as openness, receptivity, hospitality, or relationality<sup>6</sup>). The new feminists do not ascribe this quality to women in an exclusive or strict way because they claim that all humans can fulfill themselves only by loving others; still, they see women as in some sense teachers of men in this aspect.

This argument has been taken from John Paul II:

You are called to bear witness to the meaning of genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every other interpersonal relationship. [...] A mother welcomes and carries in herself another human being, enabling it to grow inside her, giving it room, respecting it in its otherness. Women first learn and then teach others that human relations are authentic if they are open to accepting the other person: a person who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or health (*Evangelium vitae*, no. 99).

Seven years earlier he wrote:

The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that *God entrusts the human being to her in a special way*. Of course, God entrusts every human being to each and every other human being. But this entrusting concerns women in a special way – precisely by reason of their femininity – and this in a particular way determines their vocation. [...] In our own time, the successes of science and technology make it possible to attain material well-being to a degree hitherto unknown. While this favours some,

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<sup>4</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, (Series *Człowiek i moralność*, vol. I), ed. T. Styczeń et al., Lublin 1982, pp. 112–113.

<sup>5</sup> G. J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality and Sexual Politics. A Catholic and Antitotalitarian Theory of the Body*, New York 2005.

<sup>6</sup> More on this in: *The Importance of Receptivity in Christian Anthropology. New Feminist Case Study*, “Polonia Sacra”, 15 (33), 2011, no 28 (72), pp. 39–46.

it pushes others to the edges of society. In this way, unilateral progress can also lead to a gradual *loss of sensitivity for man, that is, for what is essentially human*. In this sense, our time in particular *awaits the manifestation* of that «genius» which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance: because they are human! – and because «the greatest of these is love» (cf. 1 Cor 13:13) (*Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 30, emphasis by the Author).

He links not only the dignity but also the vocation of woman with her mission of receiving and responding with love; the mission of revelation that the human being exists because of love and for love, fulfills oneself through love, as it was formulated in *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24<sup>7</sup>, so often quoted by John Paul II, also in *Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 30.

Inspired by John Paul II (and Edith Stein's writings from the early 20th century), some female intellectuals and activists began to publish on the new feminist issues as well as establish new feminist initiatives like eg. Women Affirming Life, Women of the Third Millennium, ENDOW – Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women, Edith Stein Project, <http://www.the-newfeminism.net/>, <http://www.feminine-genius.com/>, [www.newwoman.org](http://www.newwoman.org), <http://www.authenticwomanhood.org>, etc. Some initiatives do not use the name “new feminism” or do not mainly define themselves by this label but actually promote its ideas and values. This pertains to many Catholic women's organizations who link faithfulness to the Catholic creed with femininity, like Women for Faith and Family or the Polish Union of Catholic Women, the Polish Women Forum, or the foundation Kobiety dla Kobiet [Women for Women]. Wanda Póltawska, the Pope's friend and promotor of pro-life culture, is a clear Polish example of a woman devoted to practical and social realization of the feminine genius and yet largely skeptical about the name “new feminism”. Still, the name comes to be more and more widely known and associated with the papal teaching on women. For example in Poland it is largely thanks to the activity of the Warsaw Center for Thought of John Paul II (which published the translations of books by Michele M. Schumacher, Katrina Zenon, and Mary Healy, and organized a students' seminar on TOB and NF), and the Cracow's Center for Research on Thought of John Paul II (where the first in Poland academic seminar on new feminism has been conducted by Fr. Jarosław Kupczak, OP, with the

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<sup>7</sup> “[M]an, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself”.

accompanying website [www.nowyfeminizm.pl](http://www.nowyfeminizm.pl)). As it was indicated, new feminism is based on the theology of the body as it treats men and women as equal, different, and complementary, as well as called to love. A lot of new feminist authors contribute their texts to websites devoted to TOB and the culture of life in general.

Practical postulates raised by new feminists concentrate on stressing the dignity of all human beings and their social entities, especially families but also larger communities. That includes being pro-life and promoting the right to have as many children as the family wants, without being interfered with by the state or international organization in the form of enforced abortion or contraception. Some new feminists envision welfare measures which would support women *and men* in their family-care so that they could better combine family and public work, if they choose so. They stress that family should be the priority of both parents, even if they differ in the type of involvement in family- and home-tasks. They also notice the need for the state to be engaged in various family-friendly policies, though that does not mean that the state should substitute for the family. On the contrary, it should let and, if necessary, help the family fulfill its duties freely. Therefore, the policies recommended are neither liberal nor social democratic, but rather subsidiary or communitarian, taking local cultural conditions into consideration. Ideas of “family income” as well as insurance or even salaries for a parent staying at home with children are recommended for consideration but all suggested measures are connected with stressing the importance of free choice of persons. The new feminist outlook stands for linking politics with ethics and service for the common good (bringing back the old Aristotelian definition of politics), associating political activity with the effort to put the human being at the center of government policies, with (also legal) promotion of self-giving rather than self-seeking, and with protecting the most vulnerable members of society (children, the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, the sick, the unborn and the elderly) against any utilitarian projects<sup>8</sup>. Discrimination against women is to be fought against but liberation is never perceived as being in conflict with the rights of anybody else, especially yet unborn children.

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<sup>8</sup> See e.g. J. Haaland Matlary, *Nowy feminizm. Kobieta i świat wartości*, transl. M. Ratajczak, Poznań 2000, pp. 66–68, 146–148, 150, 155, 165–169. More on the new feminist postulates in my article *New Feminists and Their Vision of Rights and Law*, “Societas/Communitas”, 7, 2009, no 1, pp. 239–248.

Generally speaking, rights of persons are not seen as conflictual because they are intrinsically connected with the common good and stemming from human dignity independent both from social construction and from individual choice. So, bonds between persons, social relations which duly respect freedom, are not perceived as hostile towards freedom, but as the natural and necessary condition of fulfillment of human *deeply* social nature according to which a person realizes oneself only through self-gift<sup>9</sup>. Thus, dignity of a person requires respect and love from others (as stated in Wojtyła's "personalistic norm" described in *Love and Responsibility*) and it gets realized through one's own self-gift: self-sacrifice on the basis of a free decision and the action of self-gift (recognized through bodily construction of man and woman as analyzed in TOB and woman's special experience of actual or potential pregnancy).

Earlier provided quotes from John Paul II presented his core ideas on connecting womanhood with sensitivity towards the human person and human relations but he encouraged women themselves to express their experience and bring their sensitivity to the public sphere. So, what do they say? What are their arguments behind the practical postulates enumerated above? Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes: "As the bearers of life, women, including those who never bear a child, possess a special affinity for connection and, consequently, potentially embody a special gift for connection"<sup>10</sup>. Mary Rousseau writes:

Women enjoy an incipient psychological closeness to persons, in all situations, that is rooted in our capacity for the physical closeness of pregnancy. The dignity of women, then, is located in our distinctively feminine, spousal, and maternal capacity to foster new life in other persons. With that innate, sensitive maternal insight into their individuality, we often know by a kind of instinct how to nurture their ability to love<sup>11</sup>.

She also claims that

men and women, as the act of making love shows, are not rivals in a power struggle, but partners – complementary partners – in a joint urge for self-abandon that makes them

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g. M. M. Schumacher, *The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New: From Dualism to Complementary Unity*, [in:] *Women in Christ. Toward a New Feminism*, ed. M. M. Schumacher, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, p. 20, 34–35.

<sup>10</sup> E. Fox-Genovese, *Equality, Difference, and the Practical Problems of a New Feminism*, [in:] *Women in Christ...*, op. cit., p. 307.

<sup>11</sup> M. Rousseau, *Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Women*, [in:] *The Catholic Woman*, ed. R. McInerney, San Francisco 1990, p. 23.

putty in each other's hands. Orgasm is a high point of reciprocal self-giving love. But the self-giving is different for the two spouses, different in ways that are not trivial and that cannot be overlooked. The chief difference is in male initiative and female receptivity. [...] But his initiative is not aggressive and oppressive. [...] And her receptivity is not passive and degrading<sup>12</sup>.

The human nature provides a message which has not been read or accepted by many, including the mainstream feminist movements:

The dynamism of the women's movement of our time is, then, desire rather than self-giving love. The remedy is, of course, simple [...]. It is the deep conversion that all of us sons of Adam must undergo, the conversion from desire to love, from self-seeking to self-giving, in every interaction with every human being<sup>13</sup>.

A very important point is that ecstatic love, love of giving oneself to another is not restricted to the private sphere but it's a model for social relations in general, though of course, the sexual interactions belong only to the marital union. Marguerite Léna also links human bodily nature with the social ethics:

We can only understand and live our sexual identities in the choice that we make to assume and honor them in ourselves and in others as a gift and a call, that is to say, in living in an ethical mode, which is first of all offered to us in the biological mode<sup>14</sup>.

Key points are here interconnected: not only is the social ethics to be identified as *anchored in nature* but nature is to be treated as a *gift*, and this gift is perceived to be good and calling for a response of another gift, a gift of oneself. It is a simple expression of realistic philosophical anthropology where nature, though flawed, still has a *telos*. Léna writes:

Existence is always already given and already meaningful. But this gift, to be realized, calls for the generosity of another gift; for the meaning to be made clear, the collaboration of other freedoms is called for<sup>15</sup>.

It is emblematic that one of articles by Janne Haaland Matlary clearly postulates “realism for unrealistic times”<sup>16</sup> in its title, while Mary F. Rousseau presents “community as a real ideal”<sup>17</sup> in her book *Community. The Tie That*

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19–20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> M. Léna, *A Creative Difference: Educating Women*, [in:] *Women in Christ...*, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>16</sup> J. Haaland Matlary, *Realism For Unrealistic Times*, [in:] <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=4114> (date of access: March 22, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> M. F. Rousseau, *Community. The Tie That Binds*, Lanham, MD, 1991, p. 145.

*Binds*. The restoration of realistic Thomistic perspective on nature by TOB is eagerly adopted by the new feminist authors.

Moreover, the *theological* perspective is added here which brings more light to the philosophical argumentation:

Women are, more specifically, icons of the Church, because they – as differing from men – are alone capable of entering into a spousal relationship as *brides* and thus also as mothers. They alone are able to so give of themselves as to let the beloved *literally enter within themselves* and to so receive the seed of that relation as to nourish and protect its fruit<sup>18</sup> within their body-persons. In virtue of this potentiality, they are *images* – each in her own body-person – *of that which every human being is before God*: a creature destined for union with God and thus ‘equipped’, as it were, with a certain capacity to receive him, that is to say, in the humble manner in which he chooses to give of himself [...]”<sup>19</sup> (emphasis by the Author).

Such appraisal of the feminine act of reception was a key element of the late Pontiff’s teaching: “In the Church every human being – male and female – is the «Bride», in that he or she accepts the gift of the love of Christ the Redeemer, and seeks to respond to it with the gift of his or her own person” (*Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 25).

Clearly, receptivity in TOB and the new feminist perspective is treated in a laudable way, largely against the mainstream tendency since the beginning of modernity. Starting from William of Ockham, developed by Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant, autonomy became the most highly cherished value understood as divorced from the good – created and received – therefore heteronomously imposed. This mainstream way of perception in modernity was precisely detected by Catholic theologians who were faithful to the old realist school of thought, which did not believe in the divorce between free will and the good. Servais Pinckaers, O.P., and W. Norris Clarke, S.J., persuasively described the misguided route of modern thinking which wanted to be self-sufficient and ended up being concentrated on human productivity while ignoring the primary aspect of receptivity and inspiration by the goods which exist independently of human action<sup>20</sup>. “Since women literally embody receptivity, a loss of

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<sup>18</sup> “For the sake of precision, I might add that this fruit is also very much their own” – [footnote by M. M. Schumacher within her text].

<sup>19</sup> M. M. Schumacher, *The Unity of the Two: Towards a New Feminist Sacramentality of the Body*, [in:] *Women in Christ...*, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. T. Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Washington, D.C., 1995; *The Universe as Journey: Conversations with W. Norris Clarke, S.J.*, ed. G. McCool, New York 1988.

esteem for this dimension of humanity as a whole led to a loss of esteem for women”<sup>21</sup> – as Fr. Francis Martin claimed. Pia Francesca de Solenni explains:

Prior to Descartes’ radical break from the passive intellect, there were both the active and the passive powers working together to understand, to know. With Descartes’ split, not only does woman lose her identification with the mind, but man also loses the identity with the receptive which is necessary for advance in knowledge<sup>22</sup>.

She poses an argument which shows similarity both to John Paul II’s theology and Alasdair MacIntyre philosophy:

The current understanding of receptivity is generally not laudatory. Yet, the language of Scripture imitates the language of a bride receiving her groom to illustrate the relation of every human soul before God. This does not mean that every human being is essentially feminine. Rather it indicates that there is something particularly feminine that all human beings are called to imitate. [...] Perhaps the response of the soul to God is something that woman is able to teach man<sup>23</sup>.

Michele Schumacher also notices the modern negative connotations with receptivity and defends its active, spiritual version:

Granted, receptivity is hardly an honorable concept in a modern intellectual environment that has equated it with passivity [...]. In contrast, however, to the derogatory notion of receptivity understood as *passive passivity*—where something is simply undergone or suffered—a new feminism challenges us to reappraise the value of receptivity as *spiritual (or active) passivity*, so named because the powers of the human spirit are active [...] <sup>24</sup> (emphasis of the Author).

It seems that passivity and receptivity gained the modern negative fame because they are opposite to autonomy mentioned earlier as the chief value of the self-dependent individual, supposedly endangered by any given, objective value which is not of his own creation. The image of such an independent, isolated, individualistic, self-made man is not just unrealistic, but also anti-realistic, philosophically speaking, and is, therefore, definitely rejected by new feminists and exchanged with the

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<sup>21</sup> F. Martin, *The Feminist Question. Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994, p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Pia F. de Solenni, *A Hermeneutic of Aquinas’s Mens Through a Sexually Differentiated Epistemology. Towards and Understanding of Woman as Imago Dei*, Romae 2000, p. 159.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>24</sup> M. M. Schumacher, *Feminist Experience and Faith Experience*, [in:] *Women in Christ...*, op. cit., pp. 178–179.

man and woman given and realized in community with others<sup>25</sup>. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese also criticizes the negative individualism and contrasts it with the Catholic communitarian perspective:

Catholic thought, notably but not exclusively on the nature of the human person and the culture of life, [...] offers opportunities, which have yet to be pursued, to break through the prison house of individualism. Pope John Paul II in particular has written extensively on the fallacies in understanding the human person as an autonomous or isolate entity. The human person, he insists, exists only in relation to others, just as the three persons of the Trinity exist in relation to one another<sup>26</sup>.

The reason women embrace this relational perspective is again supported with their special experience, which makes them aware that the proper autonomy is never separatist or owing nothing to anyone: “As the members of the human race who bear the next generation, who have a special relationship with new life, we must never forget that all freedom is relational”<sup>27</sup>. In another place Helen M. Alvaré states: “A new feminism understands freedom as an inherently communal project – it is not only about oneself”<sup>28</sup>. In her publications she claims that new feminism is about love, about serving others through self-giving, taking responsibility by men and women for the common good of persons. So, according to her, serving the whole community, especially its most vulnerable members, should be the Christian feminist standard of evaluating the law. That is also why she writes that the institution of permanent heterosexual marriage, promoting mutual self-giving and love across differences, should be promoted<sup>29</sup>. Mary Ann Glendon in a similar vein claims that human rights are related to one another and also involve responsibilities associated with them. Freedom is seen in her argumentation as enframed within a normative structure, it is,

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. M. M. Schumacher, *An Introduction to a New Feminism*, [in:] *Women in Christ...*, op. cit., p. xii.

<sup>26</sup> E. Fox-Genovese, *Equality, Difference, and the Practical Problems...*, op. cit., pp. 304–305.

<sup>27</sup> H. M. Alvaré, *A New Feminism*, [in:] <http://mural.uv.es/nocerma/alvare.htm> (originally published in *Liguorian*, May 1997) (date of access: March 22, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> H. M. Alvaré, *When Both Parents Work. New Feminism and the Family*, “Liguorian”, August 1998, 26–29, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> H. M. Alvaré, *Christian Feminism and Family Life in the New Millennium: a new feminism fit for a new family?*, [in:] *Themes in Feminist Theology for the New Millennium (II): Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University*, ed. F. A. Eigo, Villanova 2003, pp. 33, 35, 36.

therefore, linked with responsibility and the truth about the human being who is endowed with personal dignity<sup>30</sup>.

Based on the realist anthropology and philosophy of community, new feminism seems in late modernity a viable alternative to both individualism and collectivism, especially because the latter, as some claim, is the outgrowth of the former, its *à rebours* incarnation<sup>31</sup>. Mary Rousseau mentioned before presents community as an internal reality initiating from and actually constituted by love which is received and given forward to others. (Its practical effects are naturally visible, though community is not the external effect of it but it's the love itself, the basis of the external effect.) Love is initiated by the will to desire the good for others, but in the nature of good it is not opposed to one's own good; on the contrary, one's good is found as a side-effect of going out of oneself and recognizing as well as wishing good for others, which is naturally followed by good action towards them. The basis of this ontological and psychological community is located in their relation to the common standard, to the true reality common to them, which they want to sincerely discover. Rousseau thus claims that the necessary condition of community is Truth, and the necessary condition of conscious building of an association is the recognition of the existence of Truth, which obliges everyone to be sincere, and allows everyone to discover the underlying broad community of being<sup>32</sup>. Rousseau persuasively argues that community exists as a being independent from and preceding individuals' recognition of it, and she attractively shows how its structure depends on the existence of a factor transcending the individuals and yet present in them in its constitutive role. In a sense it can be shortened to a claim stating that truth is reality and reality is truth, and this truth is nothing else but love. This corresponds with M. Schumacher's argument that the truly liberated woman is the woman who experiences being eternally loved<sup>33</sup>. This is like saying that truth liberates because truth is that we are loved, therefore made free.

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<sup>30</sup> M. Ann Glendon, *Women's identity, Women's rights and the Civilization of Life*, [in:] "*Evangelium Vitae*" and Law, Vatican 1997, 63–75, pp. 66–68.

<sup>31</sup> A British writer in 1930's claimed that he is a communist because he is a liberal: S. Spender, *Forward from Liberalism*, Victor Gollancz, London 1937, p. 202.

<sup>32</sup> M. F. Rousseau, *Community...*, op. cit. pp. 81, 88, 90–93, 102, 104–106, 111–112, 153–156.

<sup>33</sup> M. M. Schumacher, *An Introduction to a New Feminism...*, op. cit., p. xii.

In this outlook truth is not the restraining regime but the liberating gift. Its reception is not against autonomy rightly understood but liberation from deceptive autonomy as creating one's pseudo-norms and setting free to move within the meaningful horizon of life. A simple example of how this argument is totally misconstrued or misunderstood in the cultural climate predominant nowadays, and yet, how its refreshing vitality shows itself despite this climate, was provided in a typical homily given by my parish priest one day. He told a story about his childhood friend whose parents did not want to restrict their son with making him obey any given objective norms. The result of such upbringing was expressed by this boy later on in the following words: "I did not feel loved because my parents let me do whatever, so I guessed they didn't care...". Contrary to the mainstream view claiming that relativism is liberating, the boy seemed to correctly identify the situation of at least misguided parents. It turned out in his life that actually lack of norms is the lack of meaning or even the enslaving "dictatorship of relativism"<sup>34</sup> caused by the lack of love! The lack of truth is the lack of the good, the lack of love. We might succinctly put it that "the truth about the good"<sup>35</sup> is that it is love.

But an individualistic and necessarily relativistic liberal would claim that truth is always imposed because it does not exist, it is not an independent reality but a constructed scheme (just like mainstream sociology claims that society does not exist independently of our will). I guess that at this point one really comes to the fundamental choice: either one believes in reality or not. New feminists are the ones who believe in reality and its goodness: its being meaningful and teleological because of the love creating it and keeping it going. Either one discovers and believes in love or not. No wonder then that in the case of an unbeliever one is rightfully fearful of potential imposition of heteronomous norms and fearful of being treated like an instrument in the hands of others, who claim to know the common truth. A call to give oneself, sacrifice oneself, and serve as the

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<sup>34</sup> Card. J. Ratzinger, Homily during Mass "Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice", Vatican Basilica, 18 April 2005, [in:] [http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice\\_20050418\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html). (21.03.2012).

<sup>35</sup> An important phrase in the writings of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II and studied by Adrian J. Reimers in his latest book *Truth About the Good: Moral Norms in the Thought of John Paul II, Ave Maria, FL, 2011*.

instrument in the hands of God and Mary<sup>36</sup> seems to an unbeliever utterly absurd and degrading. His worldview does not imagine the viability of the Thomistic idea of God's rule through the *free* secondary (instrumental) reasons. Mary as the *causa principalis secundaria* does not seem plausible, not to mention Christ as the "instrument" in the hands of God the Father<sup>37</sup>. However, a simple case of tolerance and open-minded attitude could fruitfully broaden the unbeliever's imagination with allowing for the question: What if such a world of love existed? Even an unbeliever would have to agree that there is at least a theoretical possibility of being an instrument that is not instrumentalized in the negative sense of the word. After all, Mary, who received nothing less than God Himself, and gave Him back in His free sacrifice, is not an example of degradation but highest honor. So, I claim that being an instrument in the hands of God in the perspective of His love is an attractive answer to the modern concerns of freedom because in its model the required self-gift is voluntary and not degrading, and it's a response of love to Love.

It's a view alternative to the predominant individualism. It's a view which, according to new feminists, is typical for those who are conscious of our human relationality, more or less closer to the sensitivity of women but equally necessary for men. Edith Stein, an early proponent of such outlook on women, characterizes them by their special disposition towards the human person and tenderness for relations, ability to empathize and a natural inclination to offering care for the holistic development of the person<sup>38</sup>. A woman is to be, just like the Holy Spirit (who is the archetype of

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<sup>36</sup> The motive of being an instrument in the hands of Mary, and ultimately God, is a key motive in the spirituality of the Schönstatt Movement founded by Fr. Joseph Kentenich in early 20th century. His book explaining this idea has recently been translated into Polish: o. J. Kentenich, *Narzędzie w dłoniach Maryi. Główne aspekty maryjnej duchowości szensztackiej (1)*, transl. Antoni Jaroch SAC, Otwock-Świder 2011. The original: Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *Marianische Werkzeugsfrömmigkeit*, Vallendar-Schönstatt 1974. This spirituality and Kentenich's agumentation is strikingly similar to the new feminist thinking but I do not analyze it here for the lack of space.

<sup>37</sup> Interesting argumentation on this Thomistic theory and on the role of Christ and Mary is provided in Kentenich's book mentioned in the previous footnote, thus providing a great example of the forementioned similarity of this spirituality with the contemporary new feminism. Cf. J. Kentenich, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>38</sup> E. Stein, *Kobieta. Jej zadanie według natury i łaski* [On Woman. Her Vocation According to Nature and Grace], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., transl. Sr. J. I. Adamska OCD, Tczew – Pelplin 1999, pp. 11–12, 21, 22, 30–31, 50, 176.

the feminine being according to Stein<sup>39</sup>), a helper of everyone on his way to fullness and flourishing. Interestingly, in another text, she proves how her own feminine way of thinking tends to be holistic, this time considering not just the question of a particular individual but the whole humanity: “The whole miracle of humanity consists in the fact that we all are one. [...] God came in order to create, together with us, the one mysterious Mystical Body: He is our head – we are Its members”<sup>40</sup> [transl. A.G.]. This seems like the *theology of the Body*, the early 20th century anticipation of John Paul II’s theology of the body and a feminine way of seeing the social world as intrinsically interwoven and united into a community of deeply interrelated persons; a community given in a potential natural form by God the Father, offered in a redeemed version by His Son, and possibly to be received and co-created by active response of humans in society.

## **Kobieta, przyjmowanie i ofiarowanie daru osoby: Nowy feminizm i teologia ciała a społeczeństwo**

### Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia i analizuje podstawową w nowym feminizmie kwestię ludzkiej relacyjności, która ukazywana jest wyraźnie przez kobiecość opartą na możliwości nawiązywania specyficznie głębokiej relacji z dzieckiem podczas okresu ciąży. Otwartość na przyjęcie nowej osoby – dziecka, w wyniku uprzedniej postawy miłosnej receptywności w relacji kobiety i mężczyzny, jest w teologicznym ujęciu Jana Pawła II istotną społecznie wskazówką głównego aspektu relacji międzyludzkich jako takich, czyli aspektu miłości wyrażonej przez akceptację wyrastającą z założenia o godności człowieka jako wartości niesprowadzalnej do wymiaru utylitarnego. Papieski personalizm propagowany przez nowe feministki (np. Michele M. Schumacher, Mary F. Rousseau, Mary Ann Glendon, Janne Haaland Matlary, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Marguerite Léna, Pia Francesca de Solenni, Helen M. Alvaré) łączy się w ich teoriach i praktycznych postulatach z realistyczną antropologią i teologią daru według Jana Pawła II (przedstawioną w jego teologii ciała, teologii małżeństwa i rodziny). Zgodnie z tym stanowiskiem osoba istnieje w relacjach wspólnotowych, danych i współtworzonych dzięki przyjmowaniu i dawaniu miłości osobowej; wolność osoby realizowana jest w relacjach i w przestrzeni prawdy o dobru, w tym dobru wspólnym; natura ludzka posiada wpisana w siebie celowość. Wymienione założenia przeciwstawiają się w oczywisty sposób stanowisku relatywistycznemu i subiektywistyczno-indywidualistycznemu. Nowy feminizm jest

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>40</sup> (In Polish:) Św. Edyta Stein – Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, *Mysli, wyznania, rozważania* [Thoughts, Confessions, Reflections], selection and edition A. Wojnowski, Lublin 2003, pp. 42–43.

zatem ciekawą alternatywą dla indywidualistycznie zorientowanych stanowisk nowożytnej filozofii społecznej; alternatywą, która wykazuje pewne podobieństwa do ujęcia komunitariańskiego (np. konkluzji Alasdaira MacIntyre'a), ale która zdaje się iść dużo dalej w kierunku sformułowania poglądu o społeczeństwie jako ufundowanym na ekstazy ludzkich relacji (Rozumienie „ekstazy” jako swoistego wyjścia z siebie i bytowania w drugim wzięte jest tu z pism Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II, a rozwinięte i poddane analizie w teorii Grahama J. McAleera). Nowy feminizm zawiera zatem wiele starych filozoficznych treści, ale wzbogacone są one o współczesną wrażliwość i wprowadzane w nowym kontekście społecznym czasów późnej nowoczesności przez kobiety jako osoby świadome wagi relacyjności z powodu natury i specyficznego doświadczenia. Artykuł nawiązuje też w końcowej części do podobieństwa refleksji nowofeministycznej do myśli św. Teresy Benedykty od Krzyża (Edyty Stein) oraz stanowiska o. Józefa Kentenicha, założyciela Ruchu Szentszackiego.