

## Where do the archival clues lead us? Is Karol Wojtyła a Doctor of the Church?

“Wojtyła Studies” has published several texts reporting on the latest discoveries in archival research on Karol Wojtyła’s work.<sup>1</sup> Continuing this theme, we would like to present further significant discoveries of materials of whose existence we were previously unaware, and which – like the previous ones – significantly enrich our knowledge of Karol Wojtyła’s thought.

Preserved in various manuscripts and typescripts, we have recently uncovered two important texts which represent a significant part of Karol Wojtyła’s significant contribution to the development of ethics and moral theology.

Both texts can likely be dated to the 1950s or 1960s, and further research will allow us to determine in greater detail the context in which these materials were created.

Regarding moral theology, the Archives of the Metropolitan Curia have unearthed the text “Moral Theology,” a quasi-textbook in which Wojtyła expounds on the most important issues of moral theology. The list of materials below is presented according to the archival reference numbers:

1. AKKW C II<sup>2</sup> 7/102 [Moral Theology – text without chapter VI, typescript]
2. AKKW C II 7/102a [Moral Theology – rough draft of manuscript]
3. AKKW C II 7/103 [Moral Theology – full text without p. 54, manuscript]
4. AKKW C II 7/103a [Moral Theology, manuscript, full text, pp. 214]

The second text is a study on ethics and was also found in the archives of the Metropolitan Curia in Krakow. Its origins also suggest the 1950s or 1960s. Below is a list of materials:

1. AKKW C II 7/104 [Ethics [study], manuscript]

A related text, but different in content:

1. AKKW C II 22/181 [Course for aspirants. Ethics, manuscript].

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. Petryszak, *The Origins of Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophical Anthropology as Recorded in Coll.[atio] and Corr.[igenda] Included in the Notes for his Habilitation Thesis*. „Wojtyła Studies” Vol. 1, No. 1 (2024), 110-125; K. Petryszak, *The First Archival Material Presented in „Wojtyła Studies” – Introduction*. „Wojtyła Studies” Vol. 1, No. 2 (2024), 2-6; K. Petryszak, *Introduction to the Series of Articles in the Debate after the Publication of „Person and Act”*. „Wojtyła Studies” Vol. 2, No. 1 (2025), 2-4.

<sup>2</sup> The notation AKKW stands for: Archiwum Kardynała Karola Wojtyły (Archives of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła). The notation “CII” is the designation of the collection of philosophical materials written by Wojtyła and is part of AKKW.

The previously unknown texts by Wojtyła mentioned above allow us to conclude that Wojtyła's thought is not limited to texts that are more widely known and published. However, its depth and consistency with the Church's teaching are revealed and expanded through subsequent archival discoveries. Moreover, not only is this unanimity with the teaching of the Church noticeable, but also a deepening of reflection and a striving to uncover new aspects of the Church's teaching. This primarily concerns teaching about the human being and love.

The materials mentioned above – as well as those previously announced and, in some cases, even those already published as part of the Polish critical edition of Karol Wojtyła's philosophical works<sup>3</sup> – after analysis and being placed in a broader context, i.e., in relation to later materials and the philosophical (primarily ethical and anthropological) themes present in John Paul II's papal teaching, allow us to propose the following thesis: Due to his contribution to the development of Catholic thought, Karol Wojtyła deserves to be included among the Doctors of the Church. Such a proposal is not a new initiative; it has been voiced by many Catholic thinkers and theologians, who provided a number of strong arguments supporting it.<sup>4</sup>

He not only deserves but – as we will demonstrate shortly – also meets the necessary conditions for becoming a Doctor of the Church.

The title of Doctor of the Church may be awarded to anyone who has made a significant contribution to deepening the understanding of the mystery of God and has significantly increased the richness of Christian experience. In the case of Karol Wojtyła, these conditions are met. The main orientation of Wojtyła's thought lies in the personal relationship between man and God, and between man and man in the context of the (man–man) relationship with God. This is clearly demonstrated by his fundamental study, "Love and Responsibility," as well as the materials we have already mentioned in "Wojtyła Studies," and those recalled in this text. Secondly, if considered outside the context of placing man and his experience in relationship to a personal God, Wojtyła's second fundamental work, "The Person and Act," is incomplete. If this kind of incompleteness is valid in relation to his famous work, so it is also valid in relation to his subsidiary works, or those just discovered. No less importantly, the substratum against which Wojtyła presents his deepened understanding of the rich Christian experience is revealed.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Dzieła filozoficzne*, vol. I-II (Kraków: WN UPJPII, 2024-2025).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. see A. Napiórkowski, P. Wachoń, *Will St. Faustina and St. John Paul II Become Doctors of the Church? Polish Saints and Apostles of Divine Mercy* (Kraków: Klasztor Ojców Paulinów, 2017); G. Weigel, "Pope St. John Paul II, Doctor of the Church?" *First Things* April 2, 2025.

This deserves all the more attention because he drew inspiration from and significantly expanded upon the thought of previous scholars, including the Doctor of Grace (*Doctor Gratiae*, St. Augustine), the Angelic Doctor (*Doctor Angelicus*, St. Thomas Aquinas), and the Mystical Doctor (*Doctor Mysticus*, St. John of the Cross). He not only developed and deepened their thought, thanks to which they were included among the Doctors of the Church, but also harmonized it and created a new way of understanding the human being and the human being in relation to God.

The argument outlined above contains a response to a possible objection concerning not so much Wojtyła's fulfillment of all the conditions necessary for being counted among the Doctors of the Church, but the name of a potential new Doctor of the Church. Shouldn't the name of this – hopefully – future proclaimed Doctor be John Paul II, rather than Karol Wojtyła? After all, in 2019, thanks to the efforts of the Polish episcopate, supported by Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, a request was submitted to His Holiness Pope Francis I to recognize John Paul II as a Doctor of the Church. So, why do we want to split hairs and propose a new proposal instead pursuing an existing initiative?

Let us expound on the arguments that allow us to understand the perspective proposed here. A broader outlook on John Paul II plays a significant role here, including his pre-papal philosophical and theological activities and resulting achievements.

First and foremost, thorough analyses of Karol Wojtyła's philosophical and theological texts – starting from the mid-1940s – and newly discovered archival materials allows us to postulate that every significant innovation proposed by John Paul II in papal teaching was in fact developed in the pre-papal period.

Furthermore, considering the way in which the official content of papal teaching was edited, one can presume that some formulations (perhaps even key ones) were supplemented, refined, or “polished” by the editors of papal documents. This does not mean changing the essence of John Paul II's thought. However, it prevents the precise determination of authorship by the signed author, as is the case with Karol Wojtyła's texts. This argument is secondary but still important.

Finally, the third argument is that Karol Wojtyła and John Paul II are the same person. This is not an obvious statement in the context of discussions centered on the continuity of the subject in which Wojtyła's thought participated and continues to participate. From this perspective, therefore, it is irrelevant whether the proposal to elevate Karol Wojtyła or John Paul II to the rank of Doctors of the Church is justified because both names concern the same person,

the same subject. Regardless, given that, while maintaining the continuity of the subject, this subject developed his most important theses as Karol Wojtyła, bringing a better understanding of man himself and man in relationship to other persons (including the Divine Persons). These resonated strongly only in papal teaching; it follows that we should focus on the period in which these ideas arose, not on the period of their resonance.

Karol Wojtyła made significant contributions in three philosophical and theological fields: ethics/moral theology, anthropology, and the closely related study of the human person. The person and the person in relationship with others, as we have already mentioned in this text, is at the heart of Wojtyła's philosophy and theology. All his efforts in various fields indicate that emphasizing the personal nature of man's relationship with himself, with others, and with God has always been the goal of Karol Wojtyła's thought. The introduction and development of this perspective ultimately led the Church's teaching down a more personalistic path, helping to advance our understanding of the mystery of participation in the communion of persons, as well as the relationship between persons and Persons. However, all of this was the original thought of Karol Wojtyła, who, as John Paul II, drew on the resources already developed by Karol Wojtyła.

For this reason, it may be tentatively proposed that official efforts be made to include Karol Wojtyła, rather than John Paul II (or Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II), among the Doctors of the Church under the title *Doctor Humanus* or *Doctor Personalis*.

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