

**Marian Gorynia**

Poznań University of Economics and Business

e-mail: marian.gorynia@ue.poznan.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-7633-8249

**Małgorzata Słodowa-Helpa**

Professor Emeritus of the Economics

e-mail: m.slodowa.helpa@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-7312-3453

**CATEGORY OF THE COMMON GOOD  
FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVE**

**Abstract.** In this study, edited on the basis of a critical review of domestic and foreign literature, as well as authors' own analyzes, previously presented in several articles (Słodowa-Helpa 2015; Gorynia 2021 and 2022), mainly in two shorter texts published in popular magazines with a range of Poland (Gorynia and Słodowa-Helpa 2022a, 2022b), selected aspects of the concept of the common good from the perspective of the Covid-19 pandemic were presented.

The authors' conviction that in the process of searching for cures to overcome civilization turbulences, the common good cannot be eliminated from the social, political, economic and moral space, was the inspiration to take up this issue. Therefore, the search for answers to the following four questions was considered leading: Will pandemic experiences catalyze a better understanding of the common good? How can they reduce its deficit? To what extent can a return to the concept of the common good, offering real forms of participation and shared responsibility, help in overcoming the painful effects of the present and future threats to civilization? Can respecting the principles of the common good be considered an imperative in the process of overcoming problems of an increasingly global scope?

In view of the ambiguity of the category of the common good and the related interpretation difficulties, it was deemed necessary to place the main part of the study in the background of the most general approach to the essence of the analyzed category and its status in philosophical and economic terms.

The summary outlines conclusions and postulates concerning the conditions for the functioning of global common goods and the possibility of using them in international cooperation.

*Keywords:* the common good, the tragedy of the commons, Covid-19 pandemic, globalization, economy of the common good.

## **Introduction**

There is a consensus that the Covid-19 pandemic revealed the weaknesses of social, economic and political systems, exposed their fundamental flaws, and in the conditions of the clash of the ideas of globalization and deglobalization, clearly exacerbated the inefficiency of the existing institutional order and the international order shaping global reality. So there are voices that it turned out to be a warning signal, and at the same time a kind of signpost, because it largely showed the range and direction of the desired reconstruction (Gorynia 2021; Maćczyńska 2021). It also created new challenges for theoreticians and empirical researchers, prompting them to revise some of their current views and re-look at systemic dependencies, and to look for alternative ideas for the organization of society and property management. Among these challenges was the common good, one of the oldest interdisciplinary categories, recalled in the past many times almost everywhere where debates on overcoming accumulating economic and social problems were ongoing, and at the same time repeatedly the object of sharp disputes and polemics (Słodowa-Hełpa, 2015a: 9–12).

Although some approaches are still in opposition to the common good, in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, on the one hand, showed the layers of human solidarity, responsibility and subsidiarity, and on the other hand, revealed equally large deposits of selfishness, hedonism and irresponsibility, this category in related to the “tragedy of the commons” treated as a kind of metaphor and a universal symbol of the threats facing our civilization, has returned to the public debate and is referred to in very different contexts. Among other things, the Covid-19 vaccine itself, its availability, production and distribution process, collective immunity, broadly understood public health and safety, solidarity and responsibility for its protection, are defined as a common good. So it is clearly visible that nowadays this idea has gained new dynamics. Still, not only in journalistic but also scientific discourse, it often functions in an intentional form, as a kind of verbal expression of empathy, an appeal to launch new forms of cooperation, for unity in the spirit of solidarity and responsibility. Such an appeal to the common good has no magical power.

Believing that in the process of searching for drugs to overcome civilization turbulences it was impossible to eliminate the common good from the social, political, economic and moral space, it seemed reasonable to take up this issue and thus inspire discussion and search for answers to the following questions: will pandemic experiences be a catalyst for a better understand-

ing of the common good? How can they influence on reducing its deficit? To what extent can a return to the concept of the common good, offering real forms of participation and shared responsibility, help in overcoming the painful effects of the present and future threats to civilization? Can respecting the principles of the common good be considered an imperative in the process of overcoming problems of an increasing, even global, scope?

The answer to such questions cannot be unequivocal, and therefore taking up this issue in the form outlined below was considered a starting point and inspiration for further analyzes aimed at future (post)pandemic changes in socio-economic systems.

The article was edited on the basis of a critical analysis of domestic and foreign literature, as well as the authors' own thoughts already presented in several other narrower studies (Gorynia 2021, 2022; Słodowa-Helpa 2015a and 2015b; Gorynia and Słodowa-Helpa 2022a, 2022b).

### **Why is a better understanding of the essence of the common good needed?**

The common good, a category derived from classical political philosophy, mainly from the views of Plato and Aristotle, deeply rooted in the social teaching of the church, constituting in many countries, including the Republic of Poland, a fundamental constitutional principle, defined by the principle of principles (Piechowiak 2003), functions in the discourse of many scientific disciplines, their diverse trends, as well as various political trends and social movements, often of different origins and character (Słodowa-Helpa 2015b: 7–8).

Although we do not intend to deal here with the fundamental problems of defining the common good, or with the concept of *bonum commune* in a historical perspective, which would certainly be useful for its better understanding and stimulation in practice, it is from this perspective that it is possible to recognize that reaching the essence, i.e. the core of the common good, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for constructive solutions. It is not an easy task, among other because this capacious, historically variable category is so general, and at the same time complex and detailed, that specific solutions of the social or economic system do not result from it. It is embedded in specific cultural, political and economic conditions and reflects the diverse social contexts in which it arises and functions. Therefore, various interpretations, and even voices that search for a common, universal definition of the common good is a dubious undertaking, are not surprising.

It is the principle of differentiation in unity embodied in it that makes this paradigm universal, but unfortunately often incomprehensible even by some professionals (Słodowa-Helpa 2015a: 8).

Since many experienced lawyers, outstanding constitutionalists, philosophers, political scientists, economists or sociologists admit that they have a problem with a clear definition of the common good and consider this task an intellectual challenge, it would be all the more difficult to expect it to be understood by an average citizen and the majority of society. In view of the dangers related to both misreading the essence of the common good, its too shallow interpretation or identifying it only with resources, some researchers use meaningful metaphors in their texts, including common soil in which both individuals and communities, narrower or wider, from family and local, through professional, regional and national to a universal community, can develop and strive for well-being.

David Bollier (2012, 2014, 2020, 2021), a long-standing promoter of the common good and one of its most expressive advocates, focused in his inquiries on the behaviors practiced and the creative potential of social relations, emphasizes that the common good is more a verb than a noun, because it does not exist without the participation of individuals, it is even the result of their cooperation (Bollier 2020). By pointing to the direction in which the common good develops and the role of communalization in it, he treats it as a kind of moral, social and political compass. It emphasizes that when people interact, sharing experiences and principles, building resources of practical knowledge and traditions, an effective system of social relations emerges that provides a permanent pattern of social energy flow and benefits for the community. In this approach, the common good, resembling a field of social and moral energy, can be treated as a universal system of organizing the flow of creative, productive social energy (Bollier 2020). The attributes of the common make Bollier compare them to DNA, the genius of which is insufficient specification and variability. Its life code can easily adapt to local conditions and, like a living organism, can co-evolve with the environment in which it functions (Słodowa-Helpa (2015b: 13).

The organizers and participants of the edition of the Civic Congress dedicated to this category (Szomburg 2012, 2013) also graphically defined the common good, considering it a “team game” and thinking through the prism of this category as the most appropriate development compass, a binder that creates society and allows its development.

The peculiarities (attributes) of the common good are best illustrated by its structure, i.e. an integrated, interdependent whole containing three components (Bollier 2012, 2014). In addition to the set of dynamically per-

ceived material and intangible resources, often identified with the common good, it includes a community that has these resources and a set of principles, values, norms and interpersonal relations regulating their use. According to Dawid Bollier (2021), it is important to perceive the common goods as a social system and a set of generative dynamics and relational logic. To treat them as resources indirectly would mean accepting those economic assumptions which hold that the market and the state are the only serious regimes responsible for managing goods. Meanwhile, as D. Bollier argues, the common goods, unfettered by business models and market forces, can be flexible, creative and open to new approaches. Their attributes make him compare it to DNA, whose ingenious feature is insufficient specification and variability. Its life code can easily adapt to local conditions and, like a living organism, can co-evolve with the environment in which it functions (Bollier 2012).

### **The common good in the philosophical discourse**

Although there is also no place here to show the interpretative diversity of *bonum commune* on a philosophical basis, especially with its historical variability, it should be emphasized that in the opinion of some representatives of this discipline, including W. Sztumski (2016), *the common good is an abstract concept, which most often functions in the form of hypostasis in social communication. It refers to abstract and disembodied sets of individuals, such as a group, community, or society, and not to specific individuals. It is even something enigmatic.* From the point of view of the task undertaken here, another comment by W. Sztumski (2016) is pessimistic, *that due to abstract, inaccurate, relative and subjective understanding the common good, it is not suitable to be a criterion of moral choices or serve as a signpost of human behavior.* The cited author also believes that considering the common good is justified only in relation to a homogeneous society. Such a society is certainly not humanity, i.e. the population inhabiting the Earth, which is a large set of diverse societies in which the common good is reduced to the goods of various social groups, primarily the ruling elite. W. Sztumski (2016) also stated that: *in philosophy, ethics and political science, the common good is defined as a good about whose benefits all members of a given community or their majority are convinced.* In his opinion, *the advantage of the common good is that it enables people to integrate and organize, but the disadvantage – that it can be used to morally justify many unjust and inhumane social systems and tyranny.*

A dozen or so years ago, in the article entitled *The philosophical foundations of understanding the common good*, Marek Piechowiak (2003: 5–35), a philosopher and lawyer, drew attention to a few more issues important from the perspective of various aspects and investigations related to the functioning of the common good, not only on the philosophical level. Below are selected those of his views which clearly correspond to the further investigations of the authors of this article. Assuming that the common good concerns a community that is a self-sufficient whole, he stated that while for centuries of human development it was justified to rely on the tradition reaching back to Plato and Aristotle, recognizing the state as such a community, now the state ceased to be a whole that can be understood and above all organize in a fair manner, in isolation from the global community (Piechowiak 2003: 34–35). At the same time, he emphasized (Piechowiak 2008: 158) that it is obvious that it is possible, and even necessary, to use the category of the common good also in the international context and in the context of globalization processes.

He also pointed to other philosophical and legal issues important in the economic discourse, including the need to distinguish the common good in the subjective and objective sense. Assuming that, in the first sense, the common good is identified with the personal development of the community, then the common good in the objective sense are the conditions for achieving this development. According to M. Piechowiak (2003: 35), the common good in the subjective sense is ontologically and epistemologically more basic.

In turn, referring to the discussions and disputes between lawyers over the draft and final wording of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997, in which the common good is one of the fundamental values exposed in the preamble to the constitution and in its first article, M. Piechowiak emphasized that it is necessary to distinguish the term common good (*dobro wspólne*), from the good which is common (*wspólne dobro*), which originally, until the debate in the second reading, was included in the draft constitution, and both terms were treated as synonyms (Piechowiak 2012: 30). In this context, based on the dispute that was taking place at the time, he explained that the change of the order of both parts of the expression clearly changed the interpretive context. The common good is an idiomatic expression, the meaning of which is not a simple sum of the meanings of its component terms and not all elements of the common good are included in the good which is common. Contrary to the case of the category of the “good which is common”, which mainly expresses the citizen’s obligations towards the state,

the “common good” emphasizes more the obligations of the state towards citizens. The constitutional principle of the common good was defined by M. Piechowiak as the “principle of systemic principles”, recognizing that for this reason any solution resulting from other principles should be subject to the fulfillment of the conditions defined by the principle of the common good.

This view of Marek Piechowiak was also followed by the lawyer Irena Lipowicz (2017: 20–28), confirming it in the work on the common good in the context of the concept of the state. She emphasized there that this historically changeable concept, saturated with axiological problems, even with an ideological overtone, is a very complex and delicate matter. At the same time, she pointed out that a democratic state ruled by law does not automatically ensure the implementation of the common good, which still requires the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity and solidarity and respect for human freedom (Lipowicz 2017: 20). It is also impossible to disagree with the view that every initiative building social trust increases social capital, and the level of this trust is a kind of treasury of the common good (Jurewicz, Słodowa-Helpa 2019: 479).

In turn, Włodzimierz Kaczocho, analyzing the ontological, axiological and objective status of the common good and the possibilities of its functioning in an institutional sense, emphasizes that each interpretation of this good is a philosophical or ideological concept, and therefore cannot be considered a theory (2011: 73). At the same time, he indicates that the main value of the philosophical concept of the common good is justice, which ensures the occurrence of social peace, which is the value of this good. Its other values are: democracy as a political system and the state, law and legal procedures that guarantee the implementation of justice and the maintenance of social peace.

The position of Łukasz Sułkowski (2009: 9–16), professor of economics and humanities, can be situated on the border of philosophical and economic discourse. His thesis that the construction of the social order aimed at protecting and developing the common good cannot negate the essence of human nature has a largely philosophical dimension. Human is characterized by an evolutionarily shaped natural tendency to cooperation and competition. Therefore, in building a social order limiting the problem of the “tragedy of the common good”, knowledge about the biological and evolutionary roots of communities of various ranges may be helpful. According to Sułkowski, the introduction of the neo-evolutionary context may bring new important threads to the analysis of the “tragedy of the commons”.

### The common good in economics

Economics is also struck by the variety of approaches and interpretations of the essence of the common good resulting from its capacity, reflecting the diverse social contexts in which it arises and functions (Słodowa-Hełpa 2015a: 8). On the one hand, especially among neo-liberal economists, there are numerous cases not only of its marginalization or even neglect, but also of a clear contempt for the spokesmen of this issue and accusations of populism and naivety. On the other hand, the antidote to such positions was the evolution of views visible among the representatives of the more and more numerous currents of heterodox economics (Jamka 2014), which caused that after the time of “exile” during more than four decades of neoliberal economy domination, the common good was extracted from the “black hole of memory” and started a new life (Słodowa-Hełpa 2015b: 7–).

In the field of economic sciences, the results of painstaking field research of Elinor Ostrom, a Nobel Prize winner, conducted with her colleagues in many regions of the world and presented in her groundbreaking book *Governing the Commons* (Ostrom 1990), translated into Polish and published in 2013, undoubtedly influenced the evolution of some positions, the revival of research activity and the development of the concept of the common good. Going against the tide of neoliberal economics, Elinor Ostrom, largely influenced by the relatively optimistic overtone of this extensive empirical research, proved the effectiveness and efficiency of community management systems and showed that the institution of community cooperation can often very well solve some problems and therefore one should resort to much richer regulatory institutional structures (Aleksandrowicz 2013).

Of course, due to the scarcity of some resources, in particular their non-renewable nature, wherever they are used jointly, there is a risk of their excessive exploitation or total consumption, and the threat of the tragedy of the commons, revealed already in the 1830s by the economist W. Lloyd, and later widely analyzed by the biologist Garrett Hardin, who shows the collective consequences to which the egoism of rationally acting individuals can lead (Chudziński, Gorynia and Słodowa-Hełpa 2017). Elinor Ostrom, however, undermined the thesis about the inevitability of threats related to the disposal of common resources and proved that society does not have to be a collection of powerless individuals trapped in a gloomy trap and is able to develop such behavior regulation mechanisms that allow to reduce or even eliminate the problems referred to as “the tragedy of the commons”. In this respect, she was able to convince and change the position even of Garrett Hardin, who – under the influence of numerous discussions with Ostrom



– 30 years after the publication of his famous essay entitled *The Tragedy of the Commons* (Hardin 1968: 1243–1248), which was approved by many neoliberal economists, he felt that it should rather be titled *The Tragedy of the Unmanaged or Mismatched Common Good* (Hardin 1998: 682–683).

Although this “tragedy” should be treated as a kind of metaphor, a universal symbol of the problems facing our civilization, it turns out that society was able to develop such mechanisms of behavior regulation that allow for limiting or even eliminating the consequences of this threat.

The next stage of the “new life” of the common good was triggered by the global economic and financial crisis at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the causes and risks of which, unfortunately, neoliberal economics, with its mechanistic concept of general equilibrium, the *efficient market hypothesis* and the ideas of *homo oeconomicus*, was unable to identify. It was precisely under the influence of this crisis that the need for a new rethinking of the state-market-society relationship, changing the current paradigm and the need to develop a new model of socio-economic order were indicated more and more often (Mączyńska 2020). It was increasingly emphasized that the systemic model, by definition, focused on the socio-economic order is an ordoliberal model of the social market economy aimed at harmonizing economic, social and environmental goals, having treaty-constitutional status in Poland and in the European Union countries (Mączyńska 2020).

The paradigm of neoclassical economics has been strongly negated by the evolutionary economy, which differs from the neoliberal approach in terms of both the approach to the issue of market equilibrium and the essence and behavior of economic entities, as well as the mechanisms shaping the dynamics of socio-economic changes. It rejects the concept of general equilibrium, fundamental to neoclassical economics, considered short-lived in the process of dynamic changes.

According to the above-mentioned Łukasz Sułkowski (2009: 9–16), neo-evolutionism indicates that human nature develops in the tension between competition for limited resources and cooperation allowing for more effective exploitation. Cooperation can take various forms, and its refined and abstract form is care for the “common good” belonging to the entire community. As an example of such a “common good”, he considered: the natural environment, medical and social care, public education, i.e. sensitive areas for which various economic and political solutions are adopted, usually related to the search for a balance between social solidarity and the pace of economic growth. The divergence in existing political and social systems can be blamed on cultural diversity, which is largely the result of historical variability in the development of societies. On the other hand, there is a certain

area related to the universality of the problem of the “common good”. According to Łukasz Sułkowski (2009: 15), it is possible to shape values, norms and social models that cultivate care for the common good. As an example of mitigating the effect of the “tragedy of the commons”, he cited global agreements on the ban on the emission of freons, and later greenhouse gases, based on a voluntary agreement, but accompanied by emission monitoring and the possibility of imposing sanctions on countries not respecting the concluded agreement.

Already under the influence of the economic crisis of 2007–2009, there were many voices that the main edifice of the economy requires a fundamental reconstruction and revision of previous paradigms, that the world needs an inclusive economy. Paul H. Dembiński (2014), called for such a renewal of economic thought that would respond to the needs of the modern world, take into account a new vision of man, and rediscover the forgotten concept of the common good. Katarzyna Chojnacka (2017), analyzing the ties and interdependencies in the state-family-social group relations, even attempted to answer the question: is the inclusive economy an antidote to the tragedy of the commons?

According to Adam Glapiński (2021: 122), in order to better understand the challenges faced by society in the third decade of the 21st century, one should go beyond the area of evolutionary economics and enter the area of behavioral economics.

Advocates of the concept of the common good, treating it as a credible alternative to growth-centered visions and a way to reduce inequalities and to increasing community activity, place it among the so-called “new economies”, the economy of the common good, meaning an absolute change of the paradigm, i.e. the way of thinking about the economy and management, and above all about its overriding goal, which determines the selection of management tools (Jamka 2014, 2017). Sometimes it is equated with the economy of the gift. It is emphasized that the concept of the common good, which is still in the nascent stage, is not so much a sign of opposition to the dictatorship of individualism and neoliberal globalization, but an expression of disappointment with the unfulfilled promise of freedom and self-realization.

The Covid-19 pandemic has clearly confirmed the need to take into account the earlier demands. Paul Dembiński in his paper “Economics Without Exclusion” (2020) emphasized that the condition for the renewal of economic thought is a solid examination of conscience and establishing a new beginning in the form of an inclusive economy, which, in his opinion, does not contradict the market economy, but rather appreciates its positive aspects.

### **Pandemic experiences as a catalyst for the common good**

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the aforementioned need to deepen responsibility, solidarity, cooperation and coordination of actions in the field of combating and preventing it on an incomparably larger global scale than before. It showed how much the world socio-economic system is a system of connected vessels and how even the best solutions adopted in individual countries, regions or corporations are not enough to generate and a continuous progress in building the prosperity and, more broadly, the well-being of the world community. It has sharpened the need for global coverage for both information and prevention. On the other hand, however, it showed that the response to the pandemic was different and that there are no universal reforms for every country or even region (Stochmal and Maciejewski 2020: 28–29). It also showed that we are dealing with an evident conflict of values, in particular between the basic value, which is the freedom of the individual, resulting from his dignity, i.e. the ability to act in accordance with his own will and responsibility for security and the broadly understood good of the community. It proved that on the way to the prosperity and lasting improvement of the well-being of entire societies, it is impossible to reconcile unilaterally determined individual priorities and unlimited freedom with ensuring harmony and order at the social level. Unlimited freedom, but also responsibility without any freedom, will always be the source of some deficit. In this way, we come to the most important, but also the most difficult issue, namely we will not understand the essence of the common good without the awareness that responsibility is fulfilled and carried out in freedom, that it always sets its framework and boundary, that freedom and responsibility must therefore go hand in hand and balance one another (Jurewicz and Słodowa-Helpa 2019: 476). Thus, although it is commonly believed that responsibility is perceived as a philosophical or legal category, the experiences of the late twentieth century, as well as several years of the new century, meant that also on the economic level, the phenomenon of responsibility is undertaken with greater intensity than before, not only in the field of business ethics. Just as individual freedom should not be a value in itself, the common good cannot be so. It is difficult to disagree with the opinion of Piotr Arak (2021), articulated in his latest book with the intriguing title “Pandemonia”, that the crisis caused by the pandemic *showed the conflict of values and the limits of individual freedom and public intervention*. It corresponds with the position of Piotr Sztompka (2016), expressed a few years ago, that *the difficult challenge is to teach citizens how to use freedom well and teach politicians to construct a field of freedom*.

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be a kind of magnifying glass, showing the lack of resistance to crisis phenomena of more and more globalized and interconnected economies (Maćzyńska 2020: 73). Moreover, it highlighted in particular the weaknesses of economies subjected to the neo-liberal doctrine and the profit dictate. In this respect, the metaphor of the Nobel laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz, who said that we had created a system very prone to a pandemic, proves meaningful and, using a metaphor, compared the neoliberal economic system with a racing car that participates in a race without a spare wheel. Thus, the pandemic influenced the growing, but still insufficient, civic awareness of shared responsibility for the fate of the world, the belief in the importance of actions for the common good and the development of a consensus thanks to which both the entire community and each individual would be able to develop.

In scientific, expert and media circles, the pandemic crisis constantly provokes discussions and new questions about the future directions of changes in socio-economic systems, enabling the restoration of order not only on a local, but also on a global scale. According to Christian Felber (2021), the initiator and long-term promoter of the economy of the common good, widely presented in the book *Economy of the Common Good. An Economic Model for the Future* (Felber 2014), the current crisis offers the possibility of fundamental reflection on the economy and the development of more sustainable and meaningful models of social development.

The arguments already cited suggest that the experiences of the pandemic may, but do not have to, contribute to a better understanding and functioning of the common good, and in this sense they can be considered its catalyst. Investigating the essence of the pandemic and understanding it seems to be the starting point for identifying countermeasures to protect our civilization against similar “black swans” or, as others prefer, “gray rhinoceros”.

### **Can the pandemic be understood as a symptom of a deficit of the common good?**

The more difficult matter is to answer the question presented in this subtitle. Much has been written about the effects of COVID-19, but the recognition of the results of the pandemic due to its unknown development over time leaves much to be desired. We know less about the causes and the knowledge about it is still not certain and unambiguous. You probably

have to accept this state of affairs, which, however, should not prevent us from making further efforts to explain this phenomenon.

The intellectual effort of the mankind – primarily scientists, experts, politicians, journalists, etc. – should therefore not only be multiplied in relation to the current situation, a method oriented to conceptually dealing with the coronavirus and its taming, but also to prevent such threats in the future. Using the language of medicine, only a good diagnosis of the causes and adequate understanding and interpretation of the pandemic can provide the basis for counteracting the symptoms and consequences and for building adequate prevention for the future.

However, the attempt to consider the origins of the pandemic in terms of the deficit of the common good turns out to be quite backbreaking, especially in the face of philosophical reservations and warnings formulated by Wiesław Sztumski (2016). On the other hand, it is helpful to understand the common good in economics, the use of which in a simple way turns out to be a difficult task.

The authors of this text express the view that it is not unfounded and not pointless to consider the COVID-19 pandemic, which here is only an exemplification of the dangers that may arise in the course of the development of earthly civilization, from the perspective of the deficit of the common good. Moreover, an intriguing hypothesis arises that the pandemic is an unintended consequence of the deficit of the common good, understood as a category which, in relation to private, individual goods, intended to serve individual agents (people, companies, consumers, investors, entrepreneurs, etc.) a good referring to the whole, to the whole of civilization, having a comprehensive / holistic character, not reducible to an individual, private good or goods.

### **Pandemic and the global common good metaphor**

Studying the concepts of the common good by representatives of various disciplines leads to the formulation of a simplified, symbolic, intuitive metaphor of the common good. According to its understanding, the concept of the common good can be quite flexibly shaped and extended beyond the existing domains of validity and use. In particular, it may be assumed that it is not impossible to depart from the assumption of the local character of the common good, which is an implication of direct (implicit) participation in its use. Building systems of lasting relationships on a global scale, however, seems to be the most difficult challenge.

It is worth noting that the metaphor of the common good adopted here, from a purely logical point of view, theoretically also include cases of non-material common world resources. It means meeting the first of the above-mentioned attributes of the common good. The fulfillment of the second condition for the existence of the common good is also possible – the concept of a community with resources can potentially be extended to all of humanity. As for the third attribute of the common good, it is building systems of lasting relations on a global scale that seems to be the most difficult challenge and can be treated as a kind of model to be pursued, but never achieved.

In the context of the above comments, several more important questions arise. The most important of them concerns the potential globality of the common good, and therefore: Can there be global common goods? Is it possible, then, to take a global approach to the above-mentioned attributes of the common good, understood as the existence of a community with resources and the existence of a set of principles, values, norms and interpersonal relations regulating their use? How to build a bridge between the local common good and the global common good?

Without disregarding the difficulties with the operationalization of the idea of the common good, the following are the foundations for the interpretation of the pandemic as a consequence of the deficit of the peculiarly understood common good. In this case, the common good is the existence of a global preventive mechanism that protects our civilization against the consequences of the appearance of “black swans”, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The common good understood in this way is an intangible resource produced by the entire humanity, world or international community. Ideally, each state and each of its citizens participate to the extent possible for them in building and using the common good. However, it is not an aggregate of individual goods, it is a kind of being from a different level or on a different plane. It is, however, not entirely without links with individual goods. On the contrary. On the one hand, it would be difficult to build the common good without prosperity / well-being / wealth / abundance on an individual basis. On the other hand, ensuring a certain level of the common good is a *sine qua non* condition for the development of well-being in individual terms. The common good understood in this way can be graded or hierarchized depending on the size of the socio-economic system we are dealing with. The common good can therefore be considered in relation to all supraindividual entities – family, group, company, region, industry, sector, state, nation, integration community, etc.

This text is mainly about the common good located at the highest level of the socio-economic hierarchy, i.e. at the global level of earthly civilization. It can therefore be assumed that the idea of the common good is best reflected by a term that emphasizes a kind of dynamic, time-changing balance between private and public goods on a global scale.

### **Conclusions and postulates**

The above considerations lead to the formulation of a few preliminary conclusions and postulates, which may at the same time constitute a starting point for further investigations and reflections.

First, the use of inspirations flowing from the philosophical interpretation of the common good, although not easy to operationalize, may be the beginning of a change in thinking about the common good in purely economic terms.

Secondly, despite the above-mentioned dilemmas and difficulties related to the incorporation of the global common good into the standard classification of goods and resources, there is room for attempts to introduce it and treat it as a mixed good.

Third, the postulated modification or development of the understanding of the common good seems to indicate the need to reconsider the relationship between competition and cooperation. Without undermining the principle of competition as the basis constituting the essence of the market economy, it is also necessary to recognize the benefits of cooperation.

Fourthly, the pandemic made us realize how much the global socio-economic system is a system of interconnected vessels and showed that even the best solutions adopted in individual countries or individual corporations, or in other smaller units, will not be enough to generate continuous progress in building prosperity and, more broadly, well-being. For this to be possible, it is necessary to assume that there is a certain necessary level of global common good, without which the functioning of smaller subsystems is exposed to the risk of extraordinary events that are difficult to predict and have enormous negative consequences of a universal nature, affecting everyone, and sometimes even posing a threat to the foundations of their existence.

Fifth, the global common good resembles the concept of global public goods, which may include, for example: world peace, global financial stability, sustainable global economic development, global public health, global cybersecurity and the like.

Sixth, one should agree with the opinion of A. Glapiński (2021: 22) that the current pandemic crisis is clearly related to the natural instinct of society, which is the need for security.

Seventh, the deficit of the global common good cannot be replaced by the efforts of individual states, no matter how powerful. From the experience of fighting the pandemic, it is clear that information should be global in nature. Both the applied preventive measures and undertaken political and economic actions should be coordinated at the global level.

Eighth, vaccines against the virus causing the pandemic are a special case that carries some hallmarks of the common good. Only vaccination of the entire world population, regardless of wealth status, seems to be one of the *sine qua non* conditions for mankind to deal with COVID-19.

Ninth, it is the society that has to choose whether to follow the path of disunity or adopt the path of global solidarity. The choice of disunity will not only prolong the crisis, but will likely lead to even worse catastrophes in the future. The choice of global solidarity will be a victory not only over the coronavirus, but also over all future “black swans” that may affect humanity in the 21st century.

Tenth, a prerequisite for further effective research is the inter- and multidisciplinary approach of researchers, building bridges between disciplines traditionally located on different sides of the barricade. In the deliberations on the common good, it is worth adopting a pluralistic and unorthodox position, allowing the analyzes to take into account the behavioral layer and, apart from natural science, the achievements of cultural research. Examples of valuable research combining, for example, natural science with social sciences can be found in the field of evolutionary psychology or sociobiology.

Finally, it is worth formulating the following questions to encourage further reflection and at the same time indicate possible directions of research:

1. How to institutionally solve the issue of the functioning of the common good?
2. How to solve the issue of leadership on a global scale?
3. Is a “world government” needed or even necessary?
4. Is the activity of international organizations developing cooperation on all the most important levels enough?
5. Where are the potential benefits of the common good greatest?

To this catalog one can add an apt question formulated by Dembiński and Barreta (2014): *how many will have enough courage and faith to attempt to create the structures of the common good and set this machine in motion?*



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