

CULTURE, POLITICS, POLITICAL CULTURE – INTERCONNECTIONS AND *BRIDGES*

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Abstract

The article discusses the concept of *political culture*, derived from its two basic components: *culture* and *politics*. By referring to selected concepts of culture and politics presented over the centuries by distinguished thinkers, scholars and researchers in humanities (especially in philosophy), this article attempts to identify elements or factors that interweave these two apparently separate spheres. Political culture observed in contemporary postmodern societies raises questions about the changing values, beliefs and goals that shape our individual and collective behaviour.

Keywords: culture, politics, political culture, postmodern societies.

Introduction

Political culture belongs to those terms which, despite numerous attempts undertaken over long centuries to define, seem to constantly slip away. Since the Enlightenment, when the foundation of modern science was reset, it became necessary to define the researched object as a prerequisite of the study. This required not only precise specification of the object, but also a clear exposition of the methods applied during the definition process. Confusion that may occur while discussing *political culture* has two main sources: a multiple views and definitions related to the word *culture* and a multiple views and definitions related to the word *politics*. These terms have been presented in numerous descriptive concepts and with numerous explanatory variants, making the term *political culture* subject to similar ambiguity as its two component word/concepts. This state of affairs leads to the general ambiguity of the discussed subject, which for various scientists will evoke complex designations depending on the disciplinary provenance of a scholar: sociological, anthropological, ethnological, linguistic, etc.

1 Culture – vagueness of the concept

It is hard to explicitly state which of the two components, *culture* or *politics*, occurred first in human consciousness. Both find early expression in ancient thought, where something that was political was also cultural, playing a significant role in shaping social life. The ancient concept of culture as a “convention” placed it in opposition to nature; it provided order and shape to objects formed by forces of nature. Human thought and handicraft took original material and modelled it according to human needs as well as individual and collective intentions. The collection of these mutual ideas, actions, and realisations was defined by Cicero as *cultura mentis et cultura animi*. Although the author of the *Tusculan Disputations* invokes philosophy, yet the definition allows us to indeed recognise the origin of culture:

“(..) as a field, though fertile, cannot yield a harvest without cultivation, no more can the mind without learning; thus each is feeble without the other. But philosophy is the culture of the soul. It draws out vices by the root, prepares the mind to receive seed, and commits to it, and, so to speak, sows in it what, when grown, may bear the most abundant fruit.”¹

In early medieval times, European culture adopted and implemented a set of values stemming from Christianity, which declared the universality of salvation, making the vision of an ideal, eternal life available for everyone. The Christian model of seeing the universe left a fundamental mark on cultural and political structures of Europe, shaping their existence and interactions of its societies. Modern times likewise brought a fundamental change, enabling science to modify the perspective, which had been determined by religion until that time. The Renaissance shift to rationalism, reason and laicism corresponded to a great extent to the ancient heritage and intellectual tradition, which again showed culture as a sphere for shaping the nobility of mind, toughening the virtues and improving the cognitive dispositions of humans. Distinguished supporters of this idea were, among others, Erasmus of Rotterdam (*On teaching plan*), Juan Luis Vives (*On sciences*), Johannes Sturm (*On the good arrangement of*

¹It is particularly related to the phrase “*Cultura autem animi philosophia est*”, which can be found in *Tusculan Disputations (Tusculanae Disputationes)*, book II, *On Bearing Pain*, V, §13, source: Andrew P. Peabody, *Cicero's Tusculan Disputation*, Boston 1886 (pp.195-250), e-version available at www.john-uebersax.com/plato/pain.htm

school), Thomas More (*Utopia*), as well as poets and writers gathered in the French Group “Pleiad” (*Protection and improvement of the French language*).

This period of reformation had a revitalizing impact on the sphere of culture, providing the origins of a pluralistic view on the creations of human thought. The Protestants contesting the Catholic/Papal order gave rise to a belief in the appropriateness of values selected by oneself, which, in this case, was based on an ethos of hard work, modesty, reduced consumption of goods, capital investment and prayer. At this moment the cultural monopoly of Catholicism was broken, opening the door for pluralistic and parallel development of different normative and directive systems.²

The Age of Enlightenment was the next milestone in understanding culture, with the views of such distinguished philosophers and scientists as, among others, Samuel von Pufendorf, Denis Diderot, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, David Hume, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Immanuel Kant. “The age of reason” or, in other words, “the age of philosophers” provided a critique that enabled us to believe in unlimited possibilities for human reason and in the perfection of its creations. It also provided the grounds to consider that great ideas can be created in an environment formed not by one particular culture, but by various, often very different and distant cultures.

The Enlightenment’s understanding of culture as a set of individual, social material and non-material products broadened the manner of conceptualising the phenomenon described here. It was enriched by such important elements as types of institutions, their ways of functioning, models of building law and its execution, fashion, manners of expression, familiarity with culture and literature or creating inventions and generating technical and civilizational progress. Such an understanding of culture became especially applicable together with Herder’s concept of the philosophy of history.³ According to the German philosopher, language and culture builds the foundations of nations - the most significant human communities; for it is by these two dispositions of language and culture that the ethnic and national bonding of societies took place, which led to the creation of more and more sublime entities.⁴

² More on this in: I. Berlin, *Pokrzywione drzewo człowieczeństwa (Bent tree of humanity)*, Warsaw 2004.

³ J. G. Herder, *Pomysły do filozofii dziejów rodzaju ludzkiego: księga druga (Ideas for a philosophy of the history of mankind: book two)*, Warsaw 2002.

⁴ *Rozum i świat. Herder i filozofia XVIII, XIX i XX wieku (Reason and world. Herder and philosophy of the 18th, 19th and 20th century)*, ed. M. Heinz, M. Potępa, Z. Zwoliński, Warsaw 2004.

The ensuing European discourse around the phenomenon of culture was dominated by two voices coming from Great Britain in the second half of the 19th century: Matthew Arnold and Edward Tylor. In the leading works of these authors, *Culture and Anarchy* (Arnold, 1869) and *Primitive Culture* (Tylor, 1871), two visions of culture collide: on the one hand, the vision of a goal and the way of self-development of a human, the manner of achieving higher levels of self-awareness (Arnold); on the other hand, the vision of a “complex unity” of equivalent civilisation, covering the gathered knowledge, convictions, art, law, morality, customs and other competences acquired by an individual by way of social interactions (Tylor). These two perspectives shaped the attitude toward the study of culture in the early 20th century, which manifested itself in trends in anthropology and cultural studies as evolutionism, neo-evolutionism, historicism and diffusionism. These and the other proposals for the theoretical explanation of culture and society had both their supporters and opponents. The aforementioned evolutionism was questioned by an American circle of anthropologists gathered around Franz Boas, who opposed linear cycles of social/organisational development, including institutions, forms of interactions or social patterns. Boas claimed that each society underwent stages of development which were unique and specific only to it and thus, would never be identical, even if they were similar to other examples. What happened to evolutionism was also familiar for other concepts or theories trying to gather and systematise knowledge about culture and its noticeable variants or versions. These other accounts also had their supporters or opponents, depending on actual trends and research tendencies; but however various or contentious, the perspective of science had changed, constituting in itself an interesting subject for cultural study and an anthropology of science.

Perhaps the most significant and fundamental turn in perceiving culture took place in the first decades of the 20th century - when the notion of a singular concept of *Culture* had been succeeded by that of plural *cultures*.⁵ The monistic concept became obsolete once and for all, giving way to multiple voices of the main anthropologists, who were supported by science and research, e.g. *The chrysanthemum and the sword. Patterns of Japanese culture* by Ruth Benedict or *Mythologiques* of Claud Lévi-Strauss.⁶ A few decades later, this pluralistic

⁵ A. Zeidler – Janiszewska, „Kultura”, „kultury”, „transkulturowość”. *Kilka uwag o pojęciach i nie tylko* [w:] *Od logiki do estetyki*, (“Culture”, “cultures”, “transculturalisty”. *A few remarks about the terms and not only* [w:] *From logics to aesthetics*, ed. R. Kubicki, P. Zeidler, Poznań 1997.

⁶ R. Benedict, *Chryzantema i miecz. Wzory kultury japońskiej* (*The chrysanthemum and the sword. Patterns of Japanese culture*), Warsaw 2003, C. Lévi-Strauss *Mythologiques: Le Cru et le cuit* 1964, *Du miel aux cendres* 1966, *L'Origine des manières de table* 1968, *L'Homme nu* 1971; see also: M. Mead, *The Study of Contemporary*

approach took an even more pronounced form reflected in the post-modernist trend, which by using the term *cultural supermarket*⁷ indicated an almost indefinite plurality of cultural variants created “on current basis” according to individual and collective human needs, trends, crazes or circumstances. The evidence of such a situation can be found in studies and publications of Jean François Lyotard, Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu, Ulf Hannerz, Julia Kristeva or Iris Young – the representatives of the post-modern social sciences of the second half of the 20th century.⁸

Culture, as a product of civilizational change, becomes at the same time its driver. There is no need to try to decide over the primacy of one or another term (culture versus civilization). However, what might be of importance is to be aware of the multiplicity of views on the world and to consent to their pluralistic existence. This notion is not evident and acceptable to everybody. A division or differentiation of the world into its social, political and cultural dimensions is easily recognizable. The concept and practice of *pluralism* delivers one of the evidences: appreciated and desired in one place, negated, blamed and cursed in another. What could be the consequences of such division or, in other words, such diversification? What kind of mechanisms foster it? What is the geography of this diversification? Which factors condition it? These are some of the many other questions that should be asked while discussing culture in the contemporary post-modern world.

2 Politics – ambiguity of the concept

A similar problem concerning definition and conceptualization of the term applies to *politics*.

In the publication *Political metaphors*, published in Polish, the reader meets various and sometimes quite divergent proposals of describing the essence of this phenomenon.

Western Cultures, Vol. 1, *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, ed. M Mead, R. Métraux, New York, Oxford, 2000.

⁷ G. Mathews, *Supermarket kultury. Globalna kultura – jednostkowa tożsamość (Cultural supermarket. Global Culture - Local Identity)*., Warsaw 2005.

⁸ J. F. Lyotard, *Kondycja ponowoczesna. Raport o stanie wiedzy (The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge)*, Warsaw 1997; C. Geertz, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist*, Harvard College USA, 1995; P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Columbia University Press 1993; U. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, New York 1992, J. Kristeva, *Soleil noir. Dépression et mélancolie*, Paris 1987; I. Young, *The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference [w:] Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. L. Nicholson, New York 1990.

Politics is seen there as an element penetrating, without exception, the majority of the spheres of the human activity: it is a way of organising and regulating the life of a community, it can be understood as a part of a divine plan by becoming a sign of the will of God, it can be the external reflection of a self-image of an acting (individual or collective) entity, a subrational game, knowledge about an experienced world, a theatre, a festival and even a masquerade.⁹ However, these are only interpretative proposals of the phenomenon examined here, but even at the very beginning of the reading we may notice, a wide and searching selection of possibilities in understanding politics. This state of the matter, however, is so typical of our post-modern and post-modernist world. Thus, the term *post-politics* should not surprise us. It is used to characterise current forms of inter- and intra-group communication forms, based on de-ideologised messages, constructed by means of provocative expressions, dynamic and fluent narration, able to catch the attention of a potential voter—however, not necessarily inviting him or her to a deeper deliberation over the message.¹⁰

The complexity of the process of defining *politics*, covering many aspects of contemporary societies, has been evident for decades both in foreign and in Polish political scientific literature. While reviewing selected Polish works on the subject, one may consider that politics is understood as:

1. the art of ruling a country, 2. the art of being chosen, 3. the strategy of maintaining power, 4. gaining or having impact on power, 5. the activity of national institutions, 6. a way of reaching social consensus, 7. the forms of conducting social dialogue, or 8. a set of tools for establishing balance and harmony in a community.¹¹ The plentitude of understandings of this term and accompanying approaches demonstrates, however, the definitions' inaccuracies. Sometimes they are too wide, sometimes too narrow, but above all, they exemplify an overwhelming tendency to combine politics only with power, and not with management.¹²

⁹ *Metafory polityki tom 2 (Political metaphors volume 2)*, ed. B. Kaczmarek, Warsaw 2003.

¹⁰ Typical elements, which characterize politics are the following: lack of clear ideology, governing giving way to managing, concentration on effective (individual or collective) image creation, telling attractive “stories”, which can acquire, maintain and convince voters to presented opinions; compare: inter alia J. Staniszkis, *O władzy i bezsilności (About power and helplessness)*, Kraków 2008, T. Goban-Klas, *Cywilizacja medialna (Media civilisation)*, Warszawa 2005, E. Mistewicz, M. Karnowski, *Anatomia władzy (The anatomy of power)*, Warszawa 2010, J. Rancière, *Na brzegach politycznego (Politics on the edges)*, Kraków 2008.

¹¹ S. Opara, *Pojęcie polityki (The term of politics)[w:] Podstawowe kategorie polityki (The basic political categories)*, ed. S. Opara, D. Radziszewska- Szczepaniak, A. Żukowski, Olsztyn 2006, pp. 41-44.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 45.

With reference to the aforementioned problem, the best solution would be to abstain from providing any definition at all. Instead we could discuss the *sense* of politics, understood for instance as “striving for achieving social objectives with the use of (or aiming to use) the state’s instruments and authority”.¹³ Worth highlighting are the social objectives here—the term, which is often present in the rhetoric related to politics and the state as an acting and dominating actor. However, these two mentioned elements are present even in the ancient thought about politics. For instance, the state in Plato’s *Republic*, was rather based on the idea of community, harmony and the well-ordered existence of clearly distinct and specialized groups. In this concept, *politics* was the act of realising public welfare, executed with the help of strict regulations of an authoritarian nature (philosophic-kingship), where the well-being of an individual was subordinated the common good.¹⁴ The Aristotelian concept of politics, however, combined it with the highest welfare which was common both for an individual and for the state, becoming thus a sphere for ethical and moral acts. Politics for Aristotle had in itself a clear ethical feature, as intended, penetrating everything, which was political. If the ethical was missing in some activity, politics disappeared, giving way to harmful practices. In this case, politics, was related to inter-personal relations, organized in the real world.¹⁵ However, in the Middle Ages, a new concept of the political world appeared under the influence of Christianity and determined by divine forces. According to St. Augustine of Hippo, these divinely-ordained forces provide the course of events, shape people’s fate, and enable an individual, as a social creature, to realise the fullness of their humanity.¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas thinks in a similar way, noticing the relevance of the social, collective life as a place where the fullness of the human spirit can truly emerge. St. Thomas highlights at the same time that as the ability of individuals to communicate between each other, due to language and reason, is a natural consequence of inherent dispositions, similarly, the concept of power comes from the same sources, as it is not possible to shape forms of collective life without ordering their internal structure, and the government (the state) serves this purpose.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 45.

¹⁴ Platon (Plato), *Państwo. Prawa (Republic. Laws)*, Kęty 2001.

¹⁵ Arystoteles, *Polityka [w:] Dzieła wszystkie tom 6 (Aristotle, Politics [w:] All works volume 6)*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 25 -225.

¹⁶ Św. Augustyn, *Dialogi i pisma filozoficzne, tom III (St. Augustine. Dialogues and philosophical letters, volume 3)*, Warsaw 1954; P. Brown, *Augustyn z Hippony (Augustine of Hippo)*, Warsaw 1993; W. Ornatowski, *Spoleczno-polityczna myśl św. Augustyna (The social and political thought of st. Augustine)*, Warsaw 1965; C. Cremona, *Augustyn z Hippony: rozum i wiara (Augustine of Hippo: reason and faith)*, Warsaw 1993.

The government, in turn, directly connected with the state - should correspond to the concept of a coherent, thoughtful way (a strategy, we would say today) of achieving the goal, envisioned in the common good. This concept is realised by adequate actions, by appropriate management of community life, in which the Aristotelian “zoon politikon”, who does not neglect earthly matters, while attending to his salvation.

Caring for common good being superior to the individual interest is also present in the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, whose politics relates to the secular sphere only, omitting the spiritual sphere. According to this thinker and theorist, the ruler and the reason of state constitute two main *entities*, of subordinating and directing all activities - both individual and collective. A ruler who taking into account this canon can avail himself of various means, even the ones, which are considered as unworthy, as each act will be justified by the ends of maintaining the state. Politics is presented here as the skilful selection and application of any means from the “human” base, uncivilised and “animal”, atavist, torn by instincts. He breaks with a noble model of previous eras of aspiring to ideals; his amoral strategy achieves the goal by all means necessary as it is required by the interest of the state (the ruler).

The authoritarian style of acting, approved by Machiavelli, was also endorsed by Thomas Hobbes. He was convinced that human behaviours result from the necessity of satisfying the basic needs characteristic of the “state of nature”. Fear, suspicion, hostility and aggression are the feelings that accompany individuals doomed to a continuous state of being alert in order to survive. However, Hobbes sees respite for the human condition and the possibility of improving a sad fate by concluding a social agreement, on the basis of which the state and a sovereign body receive power over individuals in exchange for protection. It is a virtual monopoly of authority, but one which results in returning to the individual an important freedom by “(..) getting rid of intrusive fear of sudden death.”¹⁷ Therefore, politics becomes a form of negotiating conditions of necessary agreement, on the basis of which the state undertakes to guarantee safety.

An opposite concept of social agreement was presented by John Locke who derived the human ability to cooperate not from fear and apprehension, but inborn tendencies of humans based on positive social and creative reserves of their nature. This agreement is the effect of voluntary, unforced arrangement between individuals creating a community, and as a later consequence, the state. Its characteristic feature has been concluded as a result of decisions made by the sovereign community, yet the community as a decisive entity has the

¹⁷ A Szahaj, M. Jakubowski, *Filozofia polityki (Philosophy of politics)*, Warszawa 2008, p. 40.

power to define the scope of this agreement. In this case, politics refers to the process of defining conditions of the system, on the basis of which the community decides to give away part of individual rights to the benefit of the state in order to secure free development of individuals (limited only by freedom of other co-accompanying individuals), by creating general institutional and legal structures.

John Stuart Mill argues in a similar tone, seeing individual freedom as a precondition and a source of human development and progress, as limiting a person by rigid rules specified from the top would hamper and damage not only individual but also collective life. Freedom of speech, freedom of entrepreneurship (if it does not hurt other fellow citizens), access to public education, respect for private property and above all, providing women and men with the same rights - these are the main postulates of the English philosopher. In this perspective, *politics* has expanded its scope of phenomena to include economic and educational problems, as well as equality of rights.

Thus, the concept of *politics* began more frequently and more widely to include matters which had so far appeared on the edges of political discourse only. Terms and conditions of a political system, governmental forms and ways of exercising power, methods of creating social order ceased to constitute the only aspects of political analysis. The intellectual trends of the 19th and 20th centuries brought new proposals and approaches to topics that could and should be defined as political. Anarchism, represented by Pierre Proudhon, Max Stirner, Michaił Bakunin or Piotr Kropotkin, although in two variations, individual and collective, highlighted the redundancy of government, perceiving it as harmful, especially in a state form. Destructive operations of the state and its government was a form of despotism imposed on an individual, who was after all, free by the laws of nature. The ruling minority that exercised power on behalf of the state did illegal violence to the majority subordinated to it. Therefore, politics became a form of fight for liberation that should end at the time of overthrowing inequality and establishing anarchistic communes - free, deprived of pressure and the hierarchy of previous communes, and with the same rights for women and men. If “something, which is political” could exist in such a collective, it would be related to production of goods and services, as well as their exchange with other communities, corresponding only to economic matters.

Rejection of hierarchy and the domination of national institutions, which is proposed by anarchists, also occurs in the concept of the open society of Karl Popper, yet not in such an extreme version. Politics is presented here as a type of “social engineering”, which should eliminate evil, injustice and proscribe totalitarian ideas from entering the sphere of practice, in

order to achieve some ideal, common good. Popper's concept of politics means planning the freedom of living and acting individuals within the common liberal space, equipped with adequate institutions and instruments, which favour this idea. Therefore, politics should be rational, applying reason and the critical analysis of the past in order to draw constructive conclusions from everything which has already been experienced and that should serve to plan future in a just and liberal manner. According to the philosopher, human history is not determined in advance, but belongs to the human himself - its author and actor.

The basic instrument of communication in a well-organised society, for which Popper longed, is language, understood in a much broader sense than only as a system of characters and words. A similar thought we find in Jürgen Habermas' writings, where the idea of language as the primary means for achieving social consensus (not compromise) is clearly visible. According to Habermas, a harmoniously functioning coherent society or community can be established only by effective communication, involving all parties of the process. This is the necessary precondition for effective acting, to create democratic spaces able to guarantee the indispensable conditions of development for each individual and every group. In this approach politics would be related to language and forms of communication, which enable mutual understanding, based on four so-called "claims": comprehension, credibility of the speech act, genuineness and normative correctness.¹⁸ A constructive cooperation of individuals able to build a well-organised society, based on dialogue, harmony and respect can only take place and be done in such a manner.

A similar understanding to the essence of politics, communication and consensus as undertaken by Habermas, can be found in Charles Taylor's deliberations on the matters of "identity" and "recognition". The Canadian philosopher claims that self-identification declared by an individual emerges through contacts with subjects and actors present in the cultural, social and political environment and is thus a result of a characteristic *discourse* conducted by these parties. This special milieu not only includes other individuals, closer and more distant, but also other groups, which accompany the individual in his or her (social, cultural, political) existence. Due to this, the individual or group is assigned a place by society on the basis of recognized features. *Politics* in this case is understood as a form of negotiation constantly undertaken between and among the sides. The negotiation process is very often tense: public conflicts over access to material and symbolic goods like capital or prestige.

¹⁸ According to the Habermasian theory of communication actions, J. Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego. Racjonalność działania a racjonalność społeczna (Theory of communicative action. Rationality of acting and social rationality)*, Warsaw 1999.

The role of the state, according to Taylor, is to intervene in the process and support those who are for some reasons disadvantaged, for instance due to their minority status. Thus, politics is related to a special type of arbitration, which is necessary, if the model of a well-organised society would be realised, enabling equal possibilities of development for each individual and group.

3 Political culture – a complex phenomenon

These select concepts of politics shed light on the ways of understanding and creating the political space in which a society functions. However, this space is formed directly by a few key elements. They include law, governmental administrations and systems, entities present on the political scene (individuals and parties), political thought present in the public discourse and action, and political culture. The latter, in a much broader manner than the former elements, constitutes a term enabling many interpretations and references. By political culture we may for instance understand the participation rate of citizens in elections, the language of public discourse, the need (or its lack) to form a civil society, all means of expression in social communication, the image of politicians and political parties, as well as the manner of conducting and resolving disputes, etc.

The multiple elements forming political culture and their heterogeneous nature cause that the analysis of the term becomes multidimensional, multi-level and multi-variant, making it a *dynamic* descriptive category of social reality. This dynamism corresponds both to the space itself and the actors, individuals or groups, involved in mutual interactions, avoiding involvement or excluded from it. The complicated specificity of political culture, its forms, expressions and realisations, constitutes cognitively a very attractive subject of study, both from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective.

Political culture emerged as a term in the scientific discourse relatively late, at the beginning of the 20th century. However, according to the British-Canadian political scientist Frederick M. Barnard, born in former Czechoslovakia, Johann Gottfried Herder provided one of the very first descriptions of political culture, combining it with the national character of a society.¹⁹ The national character formed in the long nation-creating process, hardened by

¹⁹ F. M. Barnard, *Herder on Social and Political Culture. A Selection of Texts Translated, Edited and with an Introduction by F. M. Barnard*, New York 1969, p. 25. In this aspect, Barnard draws special attention to Herder's *Journal of my travels in the year 1769*; see also: F. M. Barnard, *Culture and Political Development: Herder's Suggestive Insights* [in:] "The American Political Science Review", Vol. 63, No. 2, 1969, pp. 379-397,

history, geography, climate, natural and societal environment geopolitics, and also by external and internal actors (entities), becomes a drive for all activities undertaken by a community connected by a special type of bond. As the national character leaves an imprint in forms of community actions, it will also be present in the thought which has inspired these activities.

In Polish political science, the first texts corresponding directly to the term of political culture and its determinants were written by two professors connected with the University of Lviv, Jagiellonian and Warsaw Universities.²⁰ Józef Milewski and Józef Siemieński, mentioned here, tried to pin down the essence of the phenomenon in the first decades of the 20th century, trying not only to define it, but to indicate its most significant realisations.²¹ Both scholars drew attention to several distinctive, even constitutive elements of political culture, such as tradition, values, beliefs, customs, forms of collective functioning –in short, everything which is derivative and a result of historical and social processes, unique for a given region, an area or a culture circle. Such a view was coherent with a general tendency, which occurred in humanities and social sciences, one that undertook issues of collective identity and national self-identifications.

The topic of political culture in its international dimension emerged as a trend in political discourse in the second half of the 1950's. In 1955 at a conference in Princeton devoted to comparative methods used in political science, one of the speakers, Gabriel Almond, stressed the significance and necessity of including cultural aspects in the study of political systems. Why? Because they condition such facts as types of governments (e.g.

especially the excerpt devoted to integrating elements of culture *Integrating elements: political culture*, pp. 390-396.

²⁰ B. Pasierb, *Z tradycji polskiej nauki o polityce (część 1). Nauka o polityce, kultura polityczna przełomu XIX i XX wieku* [From the tradition of Polish political science (part 1). Political science, political culture from the turn of the 19th and 20th century] [w:] „Polityka i Społeczeństwo” “Politics and Society” no. 2/2005, Ed. the University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów 2005, p. 119.

²¹ J. Milewski, *Wykład o kulturze politycznej (Lecture about political culture)*, Lwów 1912, source: B. Pasierb, *Z tradycji polskiej nauki o polityce (część 2). [From the tradition of Polish political science (part 2)] Józef Milewski (1859–1916)*, „Polityka i Społeczeństwo” (“Politics and Society”) no. 3, 2006, p. 96.

Józef Siemieński made a solemn speech „Konstytucja 3 Maja 1791 roku jako wyraz polskiej kultury politycznej” (“The Constitution of 3 May 1791 as the expression of the Polish political culture”) in 1916, source: J. Garlicki, A. Noga-Bogomilski, *Kultura polityczna w społeczeństwie demokratycznym (Political culture in democratic society)*, Warsaw 2004, p. 19 see also: J. Siemieński, *Kultura polityczna wieku XVI (Political culture of the 16th century)* [w:] *Kultura staropolska (Old Polish Culture)*, Kraków 1932.

parliamentary, presidential), types of party system (single-party, two- or multi-party) or regime type (e.g. democracy, dictatorship).²² Almond highlighted at the same time that political culture cannot be identified with culture as such (to be more precise: with civic culture), owing to the fact that it constitutes its own specific part, with a considerable degree of autonomy.²³ Moreover, the scientist indicated a high operational value of the term, *political culture*, perceiving it as a better analytical instrument than *ideology* or *political party*, which were too excessive and too often used till then to describe the political life of a community.²⁴

The next decade, the 1960's, brought development and enhancement to the study of political culture. A book *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* by Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba took first place among significant publications promoting and indicating a direction for studies. The authors made a comparative analysis of behaviours, or in other words, voting attitudes, observed among the citizens of five countries: the United States of America, the United States of Mexico, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Italian Republic.²⁵ The writers drew attention to differences in the degree of citizens' commitment in political life, trying to provide an explanation of such a state of affairs.

According to Almond and Verba, the different interests of individuals and varied degree of active participation in the shaping of social and political space of their country results from diverse comprehension of mutual interest. Politics can be treated either as a primary or secondary matter, or be completely marginalised, which reflects citizens' preferences for forms of exercising power – 1.) active participation in political life connected with civic awareness of the cultural, social, economic, political and institutional conditions), 2) “provincial” or “parochial” interest when citizens/individuals remain passive with limited political knowledge and consider hierarchic government structure as something fully natural,) and 3) submissive - characterized by acceptance of authoritarian governments complemented by a complete handing over of power to a decisive entity. The main conclusion drawn from these studies emphasizes a visible correlation between durability of the democratic system and the type of civic culture, including political culture. The American and British cases,

²² G. Almond, *Comparative Political Systems* [w:] The Journal of Politics, Vol. 3/18, Cambridge University Press 1956, p. 392.

²³ op. cit., p. 396

²⁴ op. cit., p. 397

²⁵ G. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton University Press 1963.

promoting civic activity, exemplify stable democracy, whereas the Mexican or Italian ones show opposite tendencies, featuring a relatively high occurrence of the “provincial” civic attitude. Although the studies performed by Almond and Verba received strong criticism in terms of methodology, yet the publication *The Civic Culture* based on these studies, became important for launching a new revised approach in political research.²⁶

The next decades were marked with deepened, extended and intensified studies on political culture. However, one special voice should be highlighted here. It belongs to a British anthropologist, Mary Douglas, who proposed the so called “grid-group” theory for a better comprehension of individual behaviours, also in the scope of widely understood politics. According to Douglas, there are four possible variants shaping intra-group relationships: 1) fairness and equality which corresponds with the egalitarian approach (egalitarianism), 2) affirmation of individualistic attitude shaped to satisfy individual needs (individualism), 3) acceptance of hierarchical social structure with a priority of collective goals (collectivism) or 4) unquestioned submission towards an entity or decisive force (fatalism).²⁷

In groups with clear egalitarian features we may observe highly visible external borders with a simultaneous lack of internal ones. Such a condition delivers equal opportunities for individuals to participate in the material and symbolic goods of the group, making it possible for an individual to develop her or his dispositions as a social being. In this case an individual is not assigned to an *a priori* defined social role but can specify and shape it by himself or herself, taking into account the presence of similar needs of other individuals.

The social context characterised by high individualisation is conducive to autocentric actions – it means that individuals are concentrated on themselves, yet their position in a group depends on the ability to gain followers and supporters. Under such conditions, all boundaries or limits that occur are subject to continuous negotiation, a shaping space characterized by high dynamics determined by the number of interactions (the higher the number of strong personalities, the greater dynamism of interactions).

The space which is built collectively has a hierarchic structure and does not allow individuals to take up actions described in two aforementioned cases. Numerous internal regulations and strongly marked external borders cause this space to be highly formalised, and in which space an individual is assigned a specific position. Any violation of binding

²⁶ B. Walter, *Book Review*, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 27, Feb. 1965, pp.206-209.

²⁷ M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, London 1970; see also: *Symbole naturalne. Rozważania o kosmologii*. Kraków 2004.

regulations can lead to exclusion, degradation or stigmatisation of an individual. Justification for such system is the belief in the necessity of social differentiation as the condition of harmonious existence of the whole community. Each individual has a role and a function assigned; changing this ascription by the will of an individual could destabilise the whole system.

The fourth variant from the theory proposed by Douglas refers to the situation in which individuals makes their presence in a group totally, or to a considerable extent contingent upon, an entity/entities which are beyond their control. Functioning in such circumstances requires unquestionable - though not in an ostentatious manner - submission of an individual to a decisive authority. A characteristic feature of this system is a clear “isolationistic” relation, conducive to the alienation of individuals from the environment and from each other, connected with a high degree of insecurity and the lack of mutual trust (or high degree of its limitation).

The grid-group theory, while explaining definite compilations of values present in a given social context, has become a valuable analytical instrument in humanities and social science, including political science. In the last case this theory brought light to a very significant problem constituted by relations between values and decisions made by individuals.

Thus, Douglas' theory became very important to the research regarding political culture. Apart from Douglas, several other names should be stressed here, as well of authors who made a considerable impact in developing the subject of political culture. These include, among others, Donald Devine, Carole Pateman, Ronald Inglehart, Robert Putnam, Lowell Dittmer, Charles Lindblom, Michael Thompson and above all, Karl Popper, whose fundamental works made a lasting impression, forming the manner of describing social reality for many further decades.²⁸

²⁸Selected works of scholars dealing with the described topic: D. Devine, *The Political Culture of the United States: The Mass Influence On Regime Maintenance*, Boston 1972; C. Pateman, *Political Culture, Political Structure and Political Change*, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jul., 1971), pp. 291-305; R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies*, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 4(Dec., 1971), pp. 991-1017, also: *The Silent Revolution Changing Values And Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton 1977; R. Putnam, *Studying Elite Political Culture: The Case of "Ideology"*, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Sep., 1971), pp. 651-681; C. Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems*, New York 1977; M. Dittmer, *Political Culture and Political Symbolism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis*, *World Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Jul., 1977), pp. 552-583; M. Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*, Oxford

The notion of political culture, together with extensive research perspective, started to refer to a greater number of the set of phenomena. A significant breakthrough (resembling a *linguistic turn* from the 1960's and 70's) took place in the 70's by redirecting the main stream of analysis from the problem of power (seen as the result of the fight of classes) to broader issues of more social and societal nature (like cooperation, participation, social security etc.). Post-materialism, brought to the scientific discourse from political and cultural science by Ronald Inglehart, developed as a diametrical change in the system of values of high-developed societies. Values corresponding to the traditional order, such as explicit hierarchical structure of community, the family dominated by a man as the main breadwinner and decisive person, material safety, submission to government with severely limited possibility to have impact on its decisions, or fervent religiousness, gave place to new ones which laid the foundation for discussions regarding freedom of speech and expression, the possibility to co-decide in political matters, improvement of life quality by education and specialization, as well as sex equality. In his studies Inglehart identified regularities controlling social and cultural change.²⁹ Yet, what is important for us is the fact that he referred such change processes to the sphere of politics. The postmaterialistic approach according to Inglehart focuses on:

- 1) conditions conducive for building the so-called participative democracy,
- 2) animation of civil movements and initiatives,
- 3) environmental protection,
- 4) minority rights, including these of sexual minorities,
- 5) women's rights, including the right to abortion,
- 6) individualism in the economic and social sphere, or
- 7) verification of assumptions on a welfare state.³⁰

1979; K. Popper, *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach*, New York 1972, or republished many times *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (the first edition from the year 1935, the next one: 1959, 1968, 1972, 1980 and the next one).

²⁹ R. Inglehart, *Changing Values among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006*, West European Politics, Vol. 31, pp. 130 – 146, Jan./Mar. 2008.

³⁰ *The New Political Culture*, (ed.) T. N. Clark, V. Hoffmann-Martinot, Oxford 1998, p. 3-7.

The change of analytical space at the turn of the 1970's and 80's brought the need to name this a newly indicated research area and the phenomena belonging to it. In fact, it happened. *New Political Culture* (NPC) marked that view of scholarly reality by its emergence, which was opposite in relation to the previous one; it redirected a beam of light to those elements of the social world that had not been present or noticed so far. Everything which had been overlooked or invisible or simply of little significance for scholars from previous decades got its own place and name within the NPC.

Conclusion

Selected problems of *political culture* presented in this article shed light on the complexity of the phenomenon which affects all members of society, a community or a group. The delicate and sometimes invisible net of culture and politics constitutes a strong but highly flexible structure for social interactions in which all of us act. Knowing that may help understanding how we perceive and construct our environment and world in its micro, mezzo and macro dimensions.

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