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## Political Philosophy and Postmodern Society\*

### Abstract

The paper is devoted to the problem of the condition of contemporary democracy. The authoress is arguing that contemporary democracy is being daunted by the triumphant instrumental rationality, supremacy of the free market, weakening of the states and of the public sphere; it is also being endangered by the evaporation social security, by the atrophying individual agency and the sense of reality, as well as by the globalization. Postmodernity is intertwined with pluralism, ambiguity and multidirectedness of the cultural processes. Ambiguity and diversity are now becoming an important basis for the liberal democracy, threatened by demise. Postmodernity generates a new type of mentality within which the awareness of compartmentalization and contingency of human life goes hand in hand with moral sensitivity, toleration and readiness to engage in a dialogue. A postmodern person is seen as endowed with a capability to live without absolute certainty, harmonious unity and perfect accord. The task of contemporary political philosophy is to work out a new political concept of a person and of human reason, a new delineation of the basic distinctions, e.g. between totalitarianism and democracy, violence and persuasion; it has also to work out a conception of justice adequate for the postmodern society. The fate of the liberal democracy will depend upon the human ability to find a way between the extremes and contradictions of contemporary postmodern world.

Since the end of XVIII century many authors have reflected upon such negative phenomena of social life as disappearance of public relations, alienation of an individual, relativism, cynicism, chaos, nihilism and social anomy. These phenomena are interpreted as the deformation of unilaterally rationalized practice of everyday life. Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectics of the Enlightenment* claim that the auto destructive rationality of the Enlightenment will shortly lead to the fall of liberal democracy.<sup>1</sup> Will this prediction come true? The optimistic ratio-

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<sup>1</sup> M. Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, *Dialektyka Oświecenia*, transl. M. Łukasiewicz (Warszawa 1994); see also M. Horkheimer, *Krytyka instrumentalnego rozumu*, transl. J. Doktor, [in:] M. Horkheimer, *Spoleczna funkcja filozofii. Wybór pism* (Warszawa 1987).

nality of the Enlightenment definitely had its credits in breaking the feudal social system but, at the same time, it triggered the dialectics that reduces the world of virtues to what is perceived in the instrumental (economic) categories. Such way of thinking and acting transforms into authority that is organized in a far more deceitful way than traditional monarchies and modern despotisms.<sup>2</sup> In connection with this some intellectuals proclaim democracy as dead.<sup>3</sup> Such verdict seems to be premature and too simplified in its equivocality.

The feature of post modernity is unequivocal, immense complexity of any social and cultural processes and the fact that it is not unidirectional. Modern culture is full of varied ambivalences – contradictory tendencies and self-excluding ideals come to the surface with equal strength. Standardization coexists with pluralism, homogeneity with disintegration, democratic equality with new versions of inequality.<sup>4</sup> The apology resonates with the defence of human rights, the fascination of modernity is intertwined with the worship of tradition and interest in the past. The citizen of the modern states is not certain of its identity; at times he feels to be an employee, a consumer, the member of the heritage of traditions, or co-author of communities bound by an agreement. In modern information technology, postindustrial society it is the science and advanced technologies that have the prime role. This, however, goes along with a strong objection to technocratic order (criticism of instrumental reason). The most important flaw of modernity is the phenomenon of globalization that goes along the opposite tendencies appreciating the local communities and cultures triggering the ethnic nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms.

Globalization involves, first of all, connecting the economies of individual states and domination of the mobile, international capital on the world-wide market.<sup>5</sup> Physical labor has lost its significance to the benefit of intellectual efforts of international teams of technicians, engineers, managers and officers that are flexible, mobile, available and have the power of intellect. Bauman claims that globalization consists in concentration of capital and other effective financial instruments with which the concentration of freedom of activity and mobility is connected.<sup>6</sup> “In its deepest sense the notion of globalization expresses the indefinite, fussy and autonomic nature of the world and the related issues, the lack of centre, the lack of the operator’s desktop, team of directors and the management”.<sup>7</sup> According to Bauman globalization is only the name for the new disorder of the world. The synthesis, dispersion, integration of capital political disintegration, globalization and

<sup>2</sup> Total and perfidious character of this authority is exposed, for example, in the works of M. Foucault.

<sup>3</sup> See J.-M. Guehenno, *La fin de la démocratie*, (Paris 1993).

<sup>4</sup> See J.-P. Fitoussi, P. Rosanvallon, *Czas nowych nierówności*, transl. S. Amsterdamski (Kraków 2000). The authors emphasise that social sciences have difficulties capturing the peculiarity of contemporary society partially because of the fact that they use the notions and methods developed in the 50s; see p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> See Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja i co z tego dla ludzi wynika*, transl. E. Klekot (Warszawa 2000).

<sup>6</sup> See Z. Bauman, ‘Nowy nieporządek świata’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18–19 listopada 2000, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja...*, p. 71 (transl. M.Ż.).

territorial division are complementary processes. R. Robertson coined a specific term to suit this – ‘glocalisation’. The term implies the interdependence between what is global and with what is local. Showing appreciation to the local communities, ethnic and religious minorities in the glocalised world has not equivocal character either. Some emphasize that it boils to the reduction of specific, local culture to folklore, which may arise curiosity but it certainly cannot be treated seriously.

Undoubtedly, some of the problems that we face these days have global character and they cannot be solved with the aid of local means. At the same time globalization is not conducive to solving these problems. The latest trends in economy (neoliberalism, turbocapitalism)<sup>8</sup> aim at completely depriving politics of the power to act effectively, which results in the phenomenon described as disappearance of state. Alongside globalization there are processes of creating regions and groups retaining the local identity.<sup>9</sup> Multiplicity of the territorial units that are politically weak promotes economic globalization and there is no contradiction in it: “globalization of economy in all its aspects and the power with which the emphasis is put on the *principle of territoriality* are closely connected with one another and they condition themselves mutually” – we may say after Bauman.<sup>10</sup> The world-wide finances, trade, information technology industry are interested in the existence of weak states. These states are given specific requirements which are supposed to make them even weaker: “Opening the doors, saying goodbye to the thought of independent economic policy is the basic and submissively fulfilled condition to receive the financial aid of the world-wide banks and monetary funds”.<sup>11</sup> Weak states which cannot influence the economy can only have the function of police districts securing the order necessary to conduct business activities.<sup>12</sup> Such state gives up the previous social politics and starts to deal with distribution ‘from the bottom to the top’. “It is not difficult thus to see that substitution of the weak territorial states with some kind of legislative and political authority having the world-wide range would be destructive for the interests of world-wide markets”.<sup>13</sup>

The weakness of the state and the necessity of re-defining its role are stressed also by other authors. Staniszkis speaks about the decreasing role of politics understood as mechanism of systemic regulations and the twilight of the metaphysics of a state that is coerced by globalization.<sup>14</sup> According to her: “Globalization has

<sup>8</sup> See E. Luttwak, *Turbokapitalizm. Zwycięzcy i przegrani światowej gospodarki*, transl. E. Kaia (Wrocław 2000).

<sup>9</sup> See A. Chmielewski, *Globalizm i partykularyzm*, [in:] A. Chmielewski, *Dwie koncepcje jedności. Interwencje filozoficzne* (Bydgoszcz–Wrocław 2006), pp. 39–51.

<sup>10</sup> Z. Bauman, *Nowy nieporządek świata...*, p. 24 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> In response to these and other problems of the contemporary world a new offer of the so called new Third Way – see A. Giddens, *The Third Way and Its Critics* (Cambridge 2000); A. Giddens, *Trzecia droga. Odnowa socjaldemokracji*, transl. H. Jankowska (Warszawa 1999); A. Giddens, *Poza lewicą i prawicą*, transl. J. Serwański (Poznań 2001); see also *Spory wokół nowej Trzeciej Drogi*, T. Kowalik (red.) (Warszawa 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Z. Bauman, *Nowy nieporządek świata...*, p. 24 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>14</sup> The most complete modern idea of the state was given by M. Weber. He treated the state as the embodiment of the process of rationalisation and overcoming of antinomy between formal

radically changed the nature of the authority and the way it functions through its dispersion and making it more and more impersonal, invisible and difficult to put in the scheme of the equivocal hierarchy. Democracy gets corroded because the area regulated by the institutions traditionally associated with politics is shrinking. The centre of gravity in thinking about the authority is changing: even more often it is not about the authority over somebody, but the about the authority of the system over oneself; in other words – it is more about the possibility to realize complex purposes, or about the possibility to be an actor having specific identity and driving force”.<sup>15</sup> Kempny defines globalization as “widening the scope of social, economic and political relations in a way resulting in re-defining the role of national state and appearance of pressure strengthening the autonomy of local or regional cultural identities”.<sup>16</sup> Guehenno points out that global market is not able to create any global community. “Political disintermediation not only obliterates the territorial borders of national states but even within these states the differentiation between the public and private interests loses its significance and the states cease to have the monopoly to manage the public interests. There appear new public spaces that are not based on the national logic and they remain between the abstract globalization and individuals that are closed in their loneliness. The very essence of authority changes and imposes new ways of control”.<sup>17</sup> Even the most traditional functions of the state connected with the defense of sovereignty get slowly but continuously eroded – the national defense, police and jurisdiction today are perceived as part of the wide service sector and not the expression of the state independence.<sup>18</sup>

These changes gave rise to the new kind of mentality in which the awareness of fragmentarity and episodic character of individual existence co-exists with the feeling of moral insecurity and provisional character of any life choices.<sup>19</sup> It seems that in the consumption philosophy of life that dominates these days there is no place for the past seriousness and modernistic moral virtues.<sup>20</sup> Together with the progressing stratification into the areas of poverty and richness and progressing

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rationality (state, procedure) and substantial rationality (the idea of justice). This idea of the state is no longer current.

<sup>15</sup> J. Staniszkis, *O władzy i bezsilności* (Kraków 2006), p. 15 (transl. M.Ż.). See J. Staniszkis, *Władza globalizacji* (Warszawa 2003).

<sup>16</sup> M. Kempny, ‘Czy globalizacja kulturowa współdecyduje o dynamice społeczeństw postkomunistycznych?’, *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 1 (2000), p. 7 (transl. M.Ż.). This author is of the opinion that globalisation although unequivocal may become the category defining the new epoch in the history of evolution of the human society.

<sup>17</sup> J.-M. Guehenno, *Przyszłość wolności*, transl. B. Janicka (Kraków 2001), p. 12. The term *dezintermediation* was taken from the contemporary jargon of finances. It means weakening the political and administrative intermediary structures as a result of what an individual meets the processes of a worldwide range – see *ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> See Z. Bauman, *Razem osobno*, transl. T. Kunz (Kraków 2003).

<sup>20</sup> See F. Jameson, *Postmodernizm i społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne*, transl. P. Czapliński, [in:] R. Nycz (eds.), *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów* (Kraków 1997), pp. 190–213; see also F. Jameson, ‘Postmodernizm albo kulturowa logika późnego kapitalizmu’, transl. K. Malita, *Pismo Literacko-Artystyczne*, 4 (1988).

fragmentarisation of life and culture the feeling of stability and safety is disappearing. Some advance the thesis that we live in the 'society of risk'.<sup>21</sup> The mood of insecurity, danger and bitterness express themselves in contest between various manifestations of modernity. The processes against technicisation, unification, totalisation of civilisation; against expanding poverty, large city lifestyle and consumption mentality. A significant part of society feel the apathy, the feeling of helplessness, the individual subjectivity succumb to atrophy.<sup>22</sup> The ideology of multiculturalism that encourages to the friendly interest in any kinds of cultural distinctness clashes with xenophobia and manifestations of nationalism. The increasing variation in lifestyles and philosophies of life (pluralism) goes together with the superficiality of convictions and loss of sense creating horizons (Taylor) and the disappearance of the feeling of self-identity. The transformations refer also to the religious sphere (new spirituality). There follows privatization, subjectivisation and syncretism of culture.<sup>23</sup> The tendency is increasing to prioritise the ethical elements and not – strictly doctrinal – various beliefs. The value of personal religious experience is emphasized and there is a call for democracy in the Church, the tolerance and readiness to the dialogue with the unbelievers and the representatives of other religions. Some authors see the religious renewal as a saving from the increasing libertinism. Belle thinks that religion is the only force that is able to restore the discipline and ethos in the society (renewal of the virtues); religion implies come back to the tradition resistant to criticism and enabling clear identification, giving the feeling of existential safety.<sup>24</sup> Another important feature of modern culture is anesthetization that consists not only in raising interest in the space we live in, or our body and external appearance,<sup>25</sup> but also in eliminating the borders between the art and life, transforming life into a piece of art, treating the individual existence as the opportunity to make autocreational experiments and to consciously develop one's identity.<sup>26</sup> "To exist aesthetically means to resist the temptation of legalization of one's lifestyle through any kind of transcendental principles. It also implies to reject the traditional notion of ego as a substance or

<sup>21</sup> See U. Beck, *Spoleczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności*, transl. S. Cieřła (Warszawa 2002).

<sup>22</sup> The phenomenon of making decisions regarding one's own life and transferring them to others as well as the phenomenon of withdrawing from the public sphere and fear of confrontation with others is referred to by Chmielewski as interpassivity and public agoraphobia – see A. Chmielewski, *Dwie koncepcje jednořci...*, pp. 31–38.

<sup>23</sup> See D. Cupitt, *Po Bogu. O przyszłořci religii*, transl. P. Sitarski (Warszawa 1998); Ch. Taylor *Oblicza religii dzisiaj*, transl. A. Lipszyc (Kraków 2002); J. Casanova, *Religie publiczne w nowoczesnym řwiecie*, transl. T. Kunz (Kraków 2005); T. Luckman, *Niewidzialna religia. Problem religii we współczesnym społeczeństwie*, transl. L. Bluszcz (Kraków 1996).

<sup>24</sup> See D. Bell, *Kulturowe sprzecznořci kapitalizmu*, tłum. S. Amsterdamski (Warszawa 1994).

<sup>25</sup> See T. Eagleton, *Iluzje postmodernizmu*, transl. P. Rymarczyk (Warszawa 1998), pp. 99–101.

<sup>26</sup> See M. Featherstone, *Postmodernizm i estetyzacja życia codziennego*, transl. P. Czapliński, J. Lang, [in:] *Postmodernizm...*, pp. 299–332; see also A. Bielik-Robsoh, *Inna nowoczesnořć. Pytania o współczesną formułę duchowořci* (Kraków 2000), pp. 17–34. The problem of identity of an individual is also described in the work of A. Kunce, *Tożsamořć i postmodernizm* (Warszawa 2003).

at least the source of authentic life”.<sup>27</sup> Some claim that the aesthetic attitude transforms into moral pessimism and narcissism.<sup>28</sup>

Postmodern culture has no distinct centre and has no unifying force. It is not homogenous. It is mosaic-like and extremely pluralistic. MacIntyre advances the thesis that its apparent richness only disguises the gloomy world of the emptiness. The spiritual patrons of this period include the sociologists of knowledge from the Edinburg school and Weber and Simmel, the classicists of the sociological thought whose works allow us to understand the cultural processes leading to its development. The representatives of post modernity include such authors as Bauman and Baudrillard – dealing with the description and diagnosis of the current situation of culture.<sup>29</sup> Baudrillard was a pioneer of the research into the social background of postmodernism. In his works he stressed the dominant role of media in the development of the vision of the world. The peculiarity of this vision is – according to him – the fact that fast changing messages lose their reference to the reality and they become *simulacra* – copies without the original, maps without the territories. What follows is the agony of the reality which cannot be further differentiated from images, interpretations and reproductions. New, unreal hyper-reality is created which has a derivative character as regards the descriptions.<sup>30</sup> Media are the creators of the reality, changing the mass society into the post-mass society. The current masses are not present in the space. Individuals who create it do not see one another, do not participate in meetings, but they stay in loneliness from where they trace their media symbols, discourses, fashions, programmes and the hierarchies of values. The loneliness is the expression of ‘individualism’ of the representatives of postmodernism which has a systemic attitude in the mass-media programmes.<sup>31</sup> Sloterdijk puts it in the following way: “Present-day crowds, in principle, ceased to be the crowds of the meetings and they became the part of the regime in which the character of the crowd does not find its expression in the physical meeting but in the participation in the mass-media programmes”.<sup>32</sup> Although the post-modern crowds gave up its physicality, its inertial routine. “In crowds which do not show themselves as physically gathered, one can see the loss of the feeling of one’s political potency that progresses in time”.<sup>33</sup> Post-modern crowds are deprived of their potential sum of micro-anarchisms and loneliness. They are a colorful, molecular miscellany which is to cover a long way to realize

<sup>27</sup> L. Koczanowicz, ‘Bachtin i Foucault o estetyzacji życia’, *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 1 [40] 2004, p. 177 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>28</sup> See Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York 1979); see also Ch. Lasch, *Bunt elit*, transl. D. Rodziewicz (Kraków 1997).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień* (Warszawa 2000); J. Baudrillard *Ameryka*, transl. R. Lis (Warszawa 1998).

<sup>30</sup> See J. Baudrillard, *Precesja symulaków*, transl. T. Komendant, [in:] *Postmodernizm...*, pp. 175–189.

<sup>31</sup> See D. Riesman, *Samotny tłum*, transl. J. Strzelecki (Warszawa 1996).

<sup>32</sup> P. Sloterdijk, *Pogarda mas*, transl. B. Baran (Warszawa 2003), p. 13 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14 (transl. M.Ż.).

the project of democratic culture. It is even more true in light of the fact that the power of state proves to be inversely proportional to the power of the media.<sup>34</sup>

Freemarket fundamentalism endangers the democratic state. It suggests the deterministic concept of human nature as *homo oeconomicus*. Soros claims that the supremacy of economic values over any other cultural values implies the abandonment of the collective decision-making process and the substitution of the social bonds with transactions (global economy without global society). At the same time, the economic values alone do not suffice to maintain the social life and market proves to be unable to face the long-term tasks. The state exists on the time horizon that is larger than a private enterprise. It cannot, however, because of its weaknesses perform the function of the time guard. (It is also because his competencies in this field have been questioned after the experience of central planning in the socialist economies). There is no doubt that the choice of far-away time horizon and the care for the future generations has immense, moral significance; Guehenno says, that "the problem of price for the time forces us to get out of loneliness of individual choice which would be the purely utilitarian choice. It forces us to agree that our life does not belong exclusively to us, that it makes sense only if it belongs to specific community".<sup>35</sup> It is not known, however, how it would be able to encourage the short-sighted egoists to change the perspective and who could do it.

It shows that a weak state can be such a big threat to the open society as the authoritarian state is.<sup>36</sup> In spite of this, on the international forum it is not the care for state and democracy, but better audibility of the nation's voice and of the voice of the oppressed that get prioritized. Some theoreticians come up with the suggestion of the so called politics of differentiation that emphasizes the incompatibility of discourses among which there is a difference (Lyotard, Young<sup>37</sup>), or the programme of multiculturalism and the politics of identity.<sup>38</sup> Local identities get strengthened, the authenticity is approved, the ideas of nation, community and tribe get revived. The contemporary statements of UNESCO are full of words of love, peace and understanding for various cultures. The fact that is must go along with the rehabilitation of certain forms of intolerance and xenophobia is passed over in silence. If the richness of mankind is to consist in the variation of cultures, then the mutual hostility is something unavoidable and it is to be acknowledged as a stable element of political life. It is not mentioned that the hatred is the price we need to pay to retain the systems of values of individual communities

<sup>34</sup> Sloterdijk says that in the days when the masses gathered in the space there was the rule of a chairman with whom one could identify and who, at the same time, was the embodiment of ordinariness. These masses were endangered with fascism. Currently the principle of a programme is binding and the masses burn out in the entertainment and free-market competition and in this way they fulfil the vision of 'the last man' of Nietzsche.

<sup>35</sup> J.-M. Guehenno, *Przyszłość wolności...*, p. 24 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>36</sup> G. Soros, *Kryzys światowego kapitalizmu*, transl. L. Niedzielski (Warszawa 1999), p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> See I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton 1990); I.M. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford 2000).

<sup>38</sup> See B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism. Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Harvard 2002). Ch. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton 2000); W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford 1995).

undisturbed and to secure that the communities still have the strength needed for spiritual renewal.<sup>39</sup> It seems that it is not possible to connect the call for common dialogue and universal agreement with the apotheosis of variety and cultural distinctiveness. Similarly, one cannot harmoniously intertwine the universal message of natural sciences with the relativism that is taught by the contemporary humanities subjects alert to the multiplicity of lifestyles and kinds of wisdom. “The humanities subjects mercifully dispel the illusion of affinity. They break the conversation and bring everybody home”.<sup>40</sup> The belief in the equivalence and parity of all cultures inevitably introduces the element of relativism into our thinking and strengthening of the cultural differences does not improve the agreement. Finkelkraut refers to this situation in critical words. He thinks that the politics cannot be limited exclusively to showing respect to any national identity, cultural specificity, spiritual and religious rooting.<sup>41</sup> This would boil down to acknowledging that “a servant should profit from the blessings of a knout. Deprive him of the knout would mean damaging the essence, offending his human dignity, in other words – show racism. In a world deprived of transcendence, cultural identity is a guarantee of barbarian traditions which cannot be justified by God. Fanatism invoking the heavens is not to be defended, but it is not proper to criticize it if it boasts about the long tradition and its uniqueness”.<sup>42</sup> “We should be ashamed of long-term ruling over the nations of the Third World. We swear it will never happen again and decide at the beginning that we will save them from the discipline of freedom in the European fashion. Out of the fear that we will lay violent hands on the immigrants, we mistake them with livery cut for them by the history. We give up their protection from the misdemeanors or abuse of tradition, and all that to let them live the way they like it”.<sup>43</sup> Glorification of cultural differences and the fight for the emancipation of the nations lead to the appraisal of the absolute primacy of community; the slavery of an individual is depicted then as the highest individual freedom.<sup>44</sup> Finkelkraut ultimately goes to the heritage of the Enlightenment and says, that “the European spirit of the modern times very successfully deals with the cultural and religious minorities under the condition that – the way nation does – they consist of the free and equal entities. This, in turn, results in the necessity to admit the illegality of any customs, including those rooted in the most distant history which abuse the basic human rights”.<sup>45</sup> Contemporarily, however, the respect to people as free and equal persons cannot find uncontroversial background in the final metaphysical or religious truth. It is either not found in any scientific knowledge either. The very presumption of the personal identity of an individual has been questioned (Foucault, Derrida,

<sup>39</sup> For the reasons and varieties of the kinds of the contemporary nationalism see E. Gellner, *Narody i nacjonalizm*, transl. T. Hołówka (Warszawa 1991); Ch. Taylor, ‘Nacjonalizm i współczesność’, transl. G. Luczkiewicz, *Transit – Przegląd Europejski*, 1 (1996), pp. 35–66.

<sup>40</sup> A. Finkelkraut, *Porażka myślenia*, transl. M. Ochab (Warszawa 1992), p. 99 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.



Deleuze). We are in a situation which was very accurately described by Sloterdijk: 'It is where the knowledge loses its role as a foundation that is based on what is objectively real and the knowledge is not to imply anything but the centre of higher presumptions and the centre helpful in the never-ending dilemma of choice between what is lesser of two evils, that the advanced information democracy is grounded as a convent of the equally ignorant who in the mutual semi-darkness, in the sphere of tragism are looking for relatively better solutions to their relatively generalized life problems' (transl. M. Ž.).<sup>46</sup> In such situation the art of conversation and the ability to reach a fairly stable agreement (conversational turn) among the individuals whose identity is no longer expressed in the essentialist language gains significance' (transl. M. Ž.).<sup>47</sup> The awareness that we are not able to free ourselves from the presuppositions and acquire the knowledge does not diminish our need to arrange the social matters in the best possible way. That is why in spite of all the theoretical difficulties the most important issue in the philosophy of politics seems to be developing the political concept of reason and a person which will allow for keeping the basic distinctions between the totalitarian and oppressive, liberal and democratic society, between the persuasion and violence, between the justice and injustice. Philosophers such as Foucault and Lyotard obliterating these distinctions seems to close the way of political theory. Contrary to them Lévinas showing the moral sources of our culture opens the space of philosophical reflection over the contemporary society and liberal democracy. The aim of the contemporary philosophy of politics is to search for the basic principles of justice of social life and their justification (not metaphysical and not final), establishing the nature of relations between the individual and crowd, as well as pointing to the moral sources of our social life and not necessarily to its religious or philosophical (ontic, metaphysical) fundaments. The philosophy of politics, aware of its theoretical limits (among others, of the facts that it does not reach the ultimate truth and certainty, and also that it is not a complete philosophy) presupposes that some of these sources are far beyond its scope. Such source-like nature has, for example, the situation of meeting described by Lévinas in which speech and common world of senses, reason and morality are constituted. The source from which we take the knowledge about how to live is considered to be the tradition of our ancestors or a specific intellectual tradition (conservatists, communitarians), as well as the culture of the foundations which consists of a network of various plots taken from many different cultures (late Rawls, pragmatists). The source-like nature is also ascribed to the primary situation and social agreement which is recalled by such authors as early Rawls and Nozick (the Renaissance of the concept of social agreement). In the last case the considerations are limited to the philosophy of

<sup>46</sup> P. Sloterdijk, *Pogarda mas...*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>47</sup> A. Chmielewski points to the fact that Platon saw in the propely conducted wise conversation, that is dialectics, a tool to reach the unquestionable truth; currently philosophers refer to the notion of dialectics when they abolish the idea of the ultimate truth. It may be an example of a specific irony – see A. Chmielewski, *Spoleczeństwo otwarte czy wspólnota. Filozoficzne i moralne podstawy nowoczesnego liberalizmu oraz jego krytyka we współczesnej filozofii społecznej* (Wrocław 2001), p. 50.

politics, which undoubtedly is a simplification but also a considerable theoretical advantage.

We need to agree with Guehenno who notices the necessity of complying the requirements of globalization with the need to be rooted in a specific community. The author is for joining the American and European political experiences as well as disseminating the awareness of the fact that we live in a few different communities at the same time from which some are communities of a choice while others are communities of tradition.<sup>48</sup> He emphasizes that “it will be the people who – like stubborn craftsmen going slowly slowly and without a plan, never giving up the ambition of reason but at the same time not forgetting about the casual character of their history – will be responsible for building the institutions fitting their individual history”.<sup>49</sup> Hence, the road to freedom that opens for the modern people (the freedom of the postmodernists) is quite narrow. According to Guehenno we should avoid both the illusion of freedom which would be the freedom of an abstract being detached from any specific community and the illusion of the natural community which would conveniently limit our horizon”.<sup>50</sup> We should remember that ‘the common sphere of reason in the centre of the democratic ideal presupposes exchange and any individual defines himself in the specific attitude to the particular community, in a dialogue. The reason is a language, logos and the rational individual needed both by the theoreticians of democracy and the theoreticians of the market to develop their doctrine exists first in its attitude towards others who are not only similar to him, but also close to him.’<sup>51</sup> After Guehenno being a democrat in a modern world consists in convincing oneself and others that each human community is a resultant of historical fortuitousness and political decisions in which the reason must express itself. “Democratic communities of the future will be the communities of reason and communities of memory, ambitious creations of our freedom and always fragile heritage of our history”.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> “Introducing some justice into the functioning of the market, softening its most drastic effects, making the state a guardian of time, which implies the long-term future of the national community – that is how today the minimalist programme of a faction of the left-winged European party and some of the American democrats look like”, J.-M. Guehenno, *Przyszłość wolności...*, pp. 17–18 (transl. M.Ż.).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 136.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.