

Politics and power

In this article the starting point for interpreting politics is perceiving it as a being strongly determined socially with, naturally, its own autonomy and auto-dynamics, but defined through its embroilment in economic and social relations, its culture and tradition and the historical foundations of society. In this approach to the analysis of political developments are embedded a Marxist inspiration<sup>1</sup> and a conviction that this view of the essence of politics is rooted in the sociological scholarly tradition which reflects something we might call “sociological mentality”. Looking at politics from the perspective of its social setting makes for a better understanding of politics than when one focuses on its institutional and, especially, autonomous aspect. Politics is more than just a struggle to gain and hold on to state power; it is more than violence in social relations. Reducing politics to power, or making power the essence of politics, for that matter, raises my doubts. I would like to present some of them in this paper.

The question about the essence of politics is one of those questions which continue to involve endless debates – as they have ever since the dawn of human thinking on society and power. The concept of politics belongs to those categories which are sometimes defined as being “essentially contested”: the understanding of these categories will continue to spur disputes for a long time to come and vain are all hopes of ever resolving them.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays questions about the meaning of many fundamental concepts are becoming increasingly acute. There are many reasons for this. The world we live in is changing at an incredible rate. The real content of the term “politics” is also changing. Not only in the sense that the last decade has seen the global division of the world change (the old division remained valid for over seventy years), or that the foundations of historical thinking have been undermined as well as the possibility of building an economic and socio-political order which would be a better alternative to capitalism (more just). But in this sense also: practically all recognized methods of reflecting on politics and society survive their effectiveness. In the times we live in it is no use counting on absolute solutions even in the transitory sense. Old theoretical bases have been questioned and it is difficult to find new ones which one can rely on with confidence.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to old divides and debates, new oppositions are becoming more prominent. The difference in the method of approaching politics, depending on whether the method grows out of continental or analytical philosophy, is becoming clearer. Only now is there any real thorough exchange of ideas and concepts between scholars from both sides of the “iron curtain” but also, in a way, across the ideological divide. The following statement must, indeed, sound surprising: “even fifteen years back (in the English speaking countries –

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<sup>1</sup> This, irrespective of whether one feels like a Marxist or not, and irrespective of what it means to be one. Leszek Kołakowski sums up his argumentation in the following manner:

“Marxism has been the greatest fiction of this century... To confirm it has been fiction does not mean that it was only fiction. One has to distinguish between Marxism as an interpretation of past history from Marxism as political ideology. Nobody in his right mind would deny that, the so called, historical materialism has been a significant contribution to our intellectual history and that it has enriched our thinking on past history.”

Leszek. Kołakowski *Główne nurty marksizmu. Powstanie-rozwoj-rozklad*, Londyn 1988, p. 1206

<sup>2</sup> In the words of Terence Ball – in his reference to W.B. Gallie – “Literally all concepts constituting the ethical, political and esthetical discourse should be acknowledged as *essentially contested*”.

Terence Ball, *Władza*. In: Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit *Przewodnik po współczesnej filozofii politycznej*, Warszawa 1988, p. 706.

<sup>3</sup> “...we are forced to live and think in a world which has seen the bases supporting old moral convictions disappear and nothing solid to take their place”.

Chris Brown, *Stosunki międzynarodowe*. In: Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit *Przewodnik*, ..., op. cit., p. 666.

author's remark) a philosophy course which omitted Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger or Sartre was not considered incomplete".<sup>4</sup> Equally incomprehensible were statements about the deepening lack of understanding between continental and analytical philosophy, or how – only recently – the former discovers the latter and vice versa. Fundamental ideological debates of the last several decades overshadowed the not insignificant differences elsewhere. The search for axiological-cum-normative explanations of politics, the career of a post-modernist portrayal in the analysis of society and politics, the abundance of schools and approaches (coupled with their fragmentariness and eclecticism) questioning the positivist and neo-positivist tradition, let alone the opposition against Marxism, bear fruit in the form of a theoretical jungle which reflects the pluralistic nature of contemporary thought on politics.<sup>5</sup>

A situation like this calls for more reflection and for posing basic questions once again. Supplying answers would facilitate going about and would ultimately lead to an attempt at a synthesis which we lack today, if only for the purpose of questioning these answers. What we mean here is not an idle search for unequivocal and simple answers; on the contrary, what we need is to understand the multi-faceted nature of politics.<sup>6</sup>

A review of the definitions of politics would go beyond the framework of this paper. The examples we present here will illustrate the possibilities open to research in this area.

The etymology of the term "politics" is not unambiguous. As Marek Chmaj and Marek Żmigrodzki have it, the concept of politics is derived from the Greek "politikon" denoting: social, of the state, public, general, civil, everyday, ordinary, sociable and polite. This term is also associated with the concept "polis", the Greek word for "city-state", signifying: country, homeland, state, community, city, castle citizenship, government and public matters. Sometimes, the source of the term "politics" is derived from "politeia" denoting a republic or state organization, although the authors quoted above consider this idea to be less reliable.<sup>7</sup> The complex history of the concept of politics in Polish has been brought to our attention by Franciszek Ryszka.<sup>8</sup> Some authors also point to the diverse understanding of politics in English, which given the current position of political science written in this language can lead to different interpretations.<sup>9</sup>

The bulk of literature on this subject links the phenomenon of politics to power, the state and violence. This approach is taken by academics referring to the intellectual tradition of Marxism as well as other ideologies. The classical passage from Max Weber is often cited at this stage. He states that "politics" would signify "seeking to participate in power or to exert influence on the division of power either between states, or within a state between groups of people."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David West, *Filozofia kontynentalna*. In: R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit Przewodnik..., op. cit., p. 60

<sup>5</sup> See on this subject: Jerzy Kubin, *Analiza polityki i socjotechnika*. In: Lech W. Zacher, *Z zagadnień socjologii polityki*, Lublin 1996, p. 179 et seq.

<sup>6</sup> See Mirosław Karwat: *Cecha polityczności i dziedzina teorii polityki. Uwagi o formalizmie pojęciowym*. In: Ryszard Skarżyński (ed.) *Carl Schmitt i współczesna myśl polityczna*, Warszawa 1996, and Tadeusz Klementowicz: *Pojęcie tego, co polityczne Carla Schmitta, a współczesne koncepcje polityki*. In: *ibid*, p. 93 et seq.

<sup>7</sup> Marek Chmaj, Marek Żmigrodzki, *Wprowadzenie do teorii polityki*, Lublin 1996, pp. 11-22 et seq.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance: Franciszek Ryszka: *Nauka o polityce. Rozważania metodologiczne*. Warszawa 1984, p. 9 et seq.

<sup>9</sup> The distinction between the three concepts:

polity – political order, ethically interpreted as principles and institutions,

policy – content of politics, programs, ethically interpreted as goals and their justification,

politics – political actions, behavior which is ethically understood as behavior itself and attitudes (virtues).

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *Polityka jako zawód i powołanie*, Warszawa 1987, p. 2

See also, *inter alia*, Franciszek Ryszka, *Nauka o Polityce. Rozważania metodologiczne.*, Warszawa 1984, p.18 where he stressed, referring to the views of Carl Schmitt, that „he who agrees to conform to political power

A popular way of interpreting politics is understanding it as “an activity set out by a decision-making center of a formalized social group (organization) aiming at fulfilling certain goals through the use of specific means”.<sup>11</sup> In definitions focusing on the organizational aspect of social life politics is sometimes defined in terms of goals. Politics then is not only the fulfillment of goals, but first and foremost it is the social process of defining and selecting goals of a social system.

From the Aristotelian tradition continued in Christian social thought grows the definition based on the category of common good. “Politics is the prudent endeavor for the common good.” The essence of politics thus defined at the same time involves detecting its conflict-generating aspect, since “politics as a specific form of social activity is essential where human coexistence leads to problems, where conflicts arise...” In this approach the situational context comes to light, as well as its function of conciliating differing interests.<sup>12</sup>

Some authors suggest the definition of politics should be framed around the concept of trust. Trust then becomes the essence of politics as only keeping one’s promise and respecting agreements generate social ties. Trust is both a psychological phenomenon and a political strategy, seen as a method of coping with the fact that vital human interests depend on the free acts of other people.<sup>13</sup>

A vast number of academics associates politics with social needs and interests, and in consequence with solving major social problems. This is true of the Marxist tradition among others. In the words of Artur Bodnar: “Everything which concerns the choice of social aims related to the needs and interests of large social groups, the creation of structures for realizing these aims and the functioning of these groups is called politics.”<sup>14</sup> Olgierd Cetwiński pointed to the integration of social groups and more than the aim-oriented nature of politics: “A political phenomenon is a phenomenon which is directly linked to the formation and realization of the needs, ties, interests and awareness of the interests of large social groups in terms of the needs of these groups, their interests and the awareness of these interests.”<sup>15</sup>

If one recognizes that the essence of political phenomena is determined by opposing interests of large social groups and the processes of social integration and disintegration, one could argue that politics involves the articulation of interests, understood broadly not as the disclosure of the needs and formulation of interests, but as a complex process which includes

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silently accepts that this authority may demand the sacrifice of his life. The subject/agent of power equipped with this capacity exercises political power and only this power can be recognized as political. As we know from history those are the limits of politics.”, *ibid*, p.23

“The principal good politics is associated with is human life, the principal need – the need for security. The essence of politics being the protection of human life and preventing exposure to danger”

Tadeusz Klementewicz, *Głosowanie życiem, Polityka między genetycznym a kulturowym zaprogramowaniem człowieka*. In: *Historia Idee Polityka. Księga dedykowana Profesorowi Janowi Baszkiewiczowi*, Warszawa 1995, p. 345.

„A system of social relations which can be regulated through the agency of the state (primarily as regards inter-class relations) to the extent to which interference in the system on the part of the state is necessary shall be called the area of the political life of society.

Zdzisław Cackowski, *Główne pojęcia materializmu historycznego*, Warszawa 1974, p. 352

<sup>11</sup> Kazimierz Opalek, *Zagadnienia teorii prawa i teorii polityki*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 252-253. Marek Chmaj and Marek Żmigrodzki offer an almost identical definition of politics in *Wprowadzenie do teorii Polityki*, Lublin 1996, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Bernhard Sutor, *Etyka polityczna*, op.cit, p. 54 et seq.

<sup>13</sup> John Dunn, *Zaufanie*. In: Robert E, Goodin, Philip Pettit *Przewodnik po współczesnej filozofii politycznej*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 811-819.

<sup>14</sup> Artur Bodnar, *Ekonomia i polityka*, Warszawa 1976, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Olgierd Cetwiński, *Zjawisko i proces polityczny*, p. 59. In: K. Opalek (ed) *Metodologiczne i teoretyczne problemy nauk politycznych*, Warszawa 1975.

such phenomena as the representation of interests, making political decisions and the realization of interests. In this frame politics is an objectivization of the subjective ideas of interests and/or the subjectivization of the objective interests of large social groups in social practice – a subjective component of the objective historical process. In the course of this process political interests become aggregated and disaggregated; they become segregated depending on their specific content and selected according to the strength of their representation. Hence, the content of politics is the dialectical union of opposition and conflict and the cooperation between social forces seeking to realize their interests through all available means: the use of force, manipulating information, ideological legitimation, economic instruments or institutionalization.<sup>16</sup>

Politics, therefore, performs many essential functions in the social system, key amongst which are the functions of integration, adaptation and regulation, and securing a homeostatic mechanism for the system, and consequently its capacity to survive and develop.

One could continue to add to the list of models and metaphors defining the essence of politics. Mention should be made of definitions of politics which frame it in terms of continuity, change and the generation struggle, the circulation of elites, as historical creations or alienation and constraint. Other views include references to human freedom, or a specific form of market, the distribution of property or socially coveted goods. It could be defined as a network of transactions, as a contract and an exchange. Some definitions focus on the cultural aspect of politics, and explain it as communication and language, as the institutionalization of ideology, as false awareness, as a mental prison and the embodiment of Plato's idea of the grotto, as symbolic violence, theatre, myth and ritual. And viewed from the perspective of the personality of outstanding and the less acclaimed but still ambitious politicians, one can at times conclude that politics to a considerable degree is a problem for psychiatrists.

Finally let us mention those definitions which reduce politics to a certain technique devoid of a normative aspect, or to pure game. Actually, these definitions make absolute the practical problems linked to the struggle for power and make the fact of possessing power or otherwise a value in itself. So, on the one hand they are similar to the traditional interpretation of politics in terms of state power and force, on the other they divest this definition of the axiological problem of responsibility for human life and security. It follows, then, that politics becomes a social religion of sorts, a temple where the god is power for power's sake. Politics becomes a game for its own sake, and if any social interests are advanced it happens only incidentally<sup>17</sup>. The fact that politics is a game is rarely brought into question. But going a step further, isolating the game from the stake in the game seems an oversimplification.

It has been reiterated on many occasions that politics cannot be reduced to the problem of political power alone, especially state power. Even by those academics who considered power and force to be the essence of politics.<sup>18</sup> It seems however that this is still a topical issue and one which calls for further analysis. It should be carried out on the following levels:

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<sup>16</sup> More was said on the subject of politics as articulation of interests in the article *Polityka jako artykulacja interesów* in B. Kaczmarek (ed.) *Metafory polityki*, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Andrzej W. Jabłoński, Leszek Sobkowiak (ed.) *Studia z teorii polityki*, vol. I, Wrocław 1996, pp. 13-15, Ryszard Skarżyński, *Czy filozofia polityczna jest jeszcze dzisiaj możliwa?* op.cit., pp. 305-307, Stephen D. Tansey, *Nauki Polityczne*, Poznań 1997, p.17 et seq., suggests we group the definitions of politics into those which are based on political theories with a zero-sum and non-zero-sum. He believes that such authors as Weber, Lasswell ("the core of politics is who gets what, when, and how"), and the Marxists support interpreting politics as a zero-sum game, whereas Maurice Duverger thinks non-zero-sum games are possible in politics.

<sup>18</sup> See argumentation of Franciszek Ryszka, *Nauka o polityce* op.cit., p.17 et seq., and O. Cetwiński, *Zjawisko i proces polityczny*, op.cit., pp. 54-59, W. Lamentowicz, *Dialektyka i klasowe podejście badawczo-metodologiczne problemy teorii polityki*, *Studia Nauk Politycznych No.5/1978* and *Funkcje systemu politycznego a żywiołowa dynamika makrostruktur życia społecznego*. In K. Opalek (ed.) *Z zagadnień teorii polityki*, Warszawa 1978

- a) theoretical and methodological,
- b) socio-ideological,
- c) ethical.

Regarding a)

To the many well-known arguments against reducing politics to power one could add several more. For instance, many researchers linking politics with the state and power run into problems of defining the specificity of political power and differentiating it from power generally, or power in the social sense. Since we make the assumption that not all power is political power, then what is political power? Defining politics in terms of power results in tautology. If one accepts that politics denotes an area of social life where there is a struggle for power, and for wielding power, this implies that political power is power within which there is a struggle for power?

Tautology casts a shadow on the reflections of many serious scholars studying politics. A solution of sorts is a statement that political power is one which is exercised by means of force or where the use of force is a real threat. But then other hurdles appear. What is the difference between political and state power if we recognize that the monopoly on the use of force in society belongs to one of the constitutional traits of the state? The second difficulty lies in the fact that by linking politics to power the former boils down to the issue of force and violence, and is reduced to the distribution of force. Beyond doubt, history is full of violence – the key historical developments being resolved with the use of force, but has there been nothing else? One can adduce many facts to support the role of violence as the demiurge of history. However people enter into relationships of dependence not only when forced to. One must keep in mind other instruments of exercising power; and what about authority, or the difference between social and political power?<sup>19</sup>

Defining political phenomena as an area of the struggle for power may overshadow many new issues which have emerged in contemporary post-industrial societies. Their impact on social life and politics is considerable and they can have little in common with the traditionally understood political power, especially, state power. There is no place for networks of social ties in those relationships where the state or political power is defined in terms of violence. In many cases the institutionalization of civil life under the conditions of market economy and pluralist democracy takes place next to the state and sometimes against the state. An increasingly important role is being played by such associations as: NGOs, civil groups, social, sports, and tourist organizations, trade unions, the church, foundations, informal groups of citizens bound together with common interests or a desire to communicate their beliefs to others. The area of state control is shrinking.

Then there is the problem of public opinion; the impact of the mass media and institutions of mass culture is beginning to affect the views, needs and motives of the public.

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<sup>19</sup> Many academics clearly distinguish between power and force. This is true especially of those who stress the communicative aspect of power. “I could for instance exercise power by threatening to use force in case of disobedience. If however, the threat is not effective and I resort to the use of force, then what we are dealing with is not power but defeat. This is a key differentiation made by such diverse authors as Arendt, Habermas, Foucault and Giddens”.

Terence Ball, *Wladza*, *op.cit.* p.705

Cf. also the differentiation between pure politics, the politics of force –also called realistic—and ideal politics which involves values. “The idea is – according to Giovanni Sartori – that pure politics is just as unreal as its opposition, ideal politics. Any politics is a combination of idealism and realism. When one of the components starts dominating, if excessive amounts of idealism eliminate realism –or vice versa- then politics is doomed to defeat...What today is considered pure ‘politics of force’ may function thanks to the nourishment provided by ethos”.

G.Sartori, *Teoria demokracji*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 60-61.

Social communication is taking advantage of instruments, such as the Internet, which, at least in part, are beyond anybody's control.

The world is rapidly undergoing globalization. An extensive interchange of information, ideas, patterns and values is taking place. Certain norms defining life styles and human aspirations irrespective of cultural differences and national or state boundaries are becoming widespread. Human behavior is being determined by attitudes which, still not long ago, were considered immaterial. The success of the "Greens" in the German parliamentary elections highlights the changing geography of social interests and hierarchies of political values. Such categories as "environmentalism", "feminism" or "discourse" are becoming ever more relevant in the study of politics. Some writers are beginning to look at politics not from the perspective of class, states, nations or even civilizations, but through the context of, one could say, the interests of the human being as a species, i.e. from a socio-biological angle.<sup>20</sup> These new concerns voiced by political philosophers mark the emergence of issues which are extremely important for social integration and disintegration. Until now, they have been either overlooked or placed outside (or on the margins) of the traditionally defined realm of politics.

The tangle of phenomena which is given the name of "the electronic republic" offers hitherto unknown potential to the subjective political agency of the human being, as well as, alas, total control and subjection of freedom.<sup>21</sup> But there is a promise of the advancement of democracy through interactive telecommunication technology. By making a return to direct democracy possible this technology challenges the point of using the procedures of representative democracy. It calls into question the existence of intermediaries between society and state authority, such as traditional political parties or trade unions. It does, however, pose a threat to those solutions and safeguards which protect the interests of minorities against the tyranny of the majority. Although these problems may seem remote their advent appears quite inevitable. Seeking to analyze them from the angle of politics – concerned primarily with power based on force – can be likened to a researcher looking for elementary particles through an optical microscope.

Economic globalization and mass communication challenge the role of the modern state. Politics is gaining a global dimension; global economy is going hand in hand with global social ties, hence, social interests. More thought should be given to the political clout of large corporations, the sale value of which is often higher than the GDP of many countries. A closer look at corporations from the context of models and dialectics, in keeping with the conception of *autopoiesis* let us say, would reveal that these are systems with their own environments, where the inter-corporation quest for resources and global corporate competition carry more weight in terms of world future than the political games analyzed traditionally in parliaments.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, globalization is a process full of oppositions, reflecting the inequality of economic and social growth worldwide, and the globalization of threats to the security and stability of the world. The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks on New York and Washington support this tragic fact. These attacks have also demonstrated the helplessness of large

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<sup>20</sup> See relevant chapters in R.E. Goodin, P.Pettit, *Przewodnik po współczesnej filozofii politycznej*, op.cit., and Samuel P. Huntington, *Zderzenie cywilizacji i nowy kształt ładu światowego*, Warszawa 1998.

<sup>21</sup> See: Lawrence K.Grossman, *Republika elektroniczna*. In: *Władza i społeczeństwo 2*, Warszawa 1998, selected and edited by Jerzy Szczupaczyński, pp.285-2294.

<sup>22</sup> This issue is addressed by economics, management and sociology of organizations. Traditional political science and socio-politics are not concerned with it. It seems that the study of organizations took advantage of the metaphors of politics to a larger extent than politics used metaphors of organizations. A change in these proportions could prove quite fruitful. See Gareth Morgan, *Obrazy organizacji*, Warszawa 1997 who writes: "Many modern organizations are bigger and mightier than the national state, but unlike the national state they are responsible to nobody but themselves", p.357.

bureaucratic state organizations when confronted with the threat from non-state structures and political subjects, organized as a network rather than a bureaucracy.

Regarding b)

Looking at the social and ideological aspects of politics one can ask questions about the social sources of interpreting politics in a way which leads to the fetishism of power, especially power based on the use of force. This viewpoint is a reflection of the interests of those who are professionally involved in the struggle for power or holding on to power, as well as those who work in the service of power. This view is shared either by professional politicians or bureaucrats. For them, power gives meaning to their lives, it is the goal and foundation of their existence. In this context Max Weber's old dilemma comes to the fore: to live from politics or for politics?<sup>23</sup> This is a natural perspective for these groups. A cook will see the kitchen from the point of view of the pot and the stew, a driver – will look at people from the point of view of his car. The same items will be viewed differently by different members of the public: voters, inquirers at an office, guests at a restaurant or passengers on a bus. All these people want results; what matters to them is the extent to which their interests will be taken care of. And the politician, with his power, the official with his office, the cook with his pot, the driver with his car will be perceived as the means to satisfy their needs. In this sense power is not a goal for its own sake, but rather the means to achieving this goal, it is an instrument for regulating social relations. The use of this instrument brings about changes in the social status of the people, fulfilling the needs of some and ignoring the needs of others. The question whether this is a zero-sum or non-zero-sum game is incidental. Traditional thinking about politics is tainted with a similar simplification as the classical theory of organizations which perceives an organization as a closed system – whereas all social systems are open. For contemporary conceptions of organizations, what takes place in the organization's environment and the interplay between the two is of major importance. This gives rise to the marketing approach to organizations in which the client and his needs are of crucial importance. An organization does not exist for itself: it exists because it can find a customer and satisfy his needs. In this sense it is similar to politics. For this reason the study of politics should free itself from the mould of interpreting politics as a closed system.

Seymour Lipset once wrote that the problem of contemporary politics is not capitalism or socialism but the relationship between bureaucracy and democracy.<sup>24</sup> Although it has been difficult to agree with him, today this relationship plays an important part in politics.

Focusing the public's attention on power seen as the essence of politics not only reflects the cast interests of political classes and the bureaucracy, but draws attention away from many other issues vital to pursuing the interests of members of the public. This resembles a situation when the person chairing a meeting leaves the most important points of the agenda to the very end in the hope that the participants become too tired to object to the proposals put forward by the organizers.

The interests of the management, invariably present in society as a result of the division of labor, are prominent in all types of societies. The study of the sources of politics in terms of the interests of large social groups, including classes and nations, should not imply overlooking the interests of the management which is progressively becoming more autonomous. Working in the service of politics, these social groups offer a definition of politics legitimating their role.<sup>25</sup> These groups, especially the bureaucracy of corporations

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<sup>23</sup> See: Max Weber, *Polityka jako zawód i powołanie*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Lipset was referring here to the output of Weber and Michels. See: Seymour Martin Lipset, *Homo politicus. Społeczne podstawy polityki*, Warszawa 1998, p.31.

<sup>25</sup> I think the interests of the management played a crucial – positive – role (if one may put a value on it) in the transformation of real socialism although many contemporary ideologues seem to ignore this for ideological

and international organizations are undergoing different changes – globalization being one of them.

Regarding c)

Moreover, making a fetish of power, as the essence of politics, has ethical and moral consequences. It leads to the justification of all means used to capture and maintain power. In this case, the evaluation of the means lies exclusively in the area of politics not outside. Politics is effective when it leads to the seizure and exercise of power. The one who has power is always right; the victor is never judged.

Such a point of view is in line with a politicizing mentality. An effective politician can indeed hold on to power at all costs.<sup>26</sup> It is a different story when the realization of social interests becomes the essence of politics: it may turn out that from the viewpoint of social need-fulfillment it is better to give power away. This can represent the cost of pursuing politics in compliance with social needs. The difference between a politician and a politician lies in the fact that the former treats power as a means of expressing and realizing social interests and not as a goal in itself. However, the majority of people involved in politics in their thinking and acting are driven by their quest for power, selecting their social interests. If this game loses its social meaning – it loses its social value. Only the needs of the players get fulfilled and they are only the plenipotentiaries of the real subjects of politics.<sup>27</sup>

If obtaining and exercising power was to be a goal for its own sake, politics would have been reduced to social manipulation in the exclusive service of political players. The fact that this is often the case leads to the frequent embarrassment of politics, public temperance, mistrust of politics, politicians and power. This lack of trust serves as a safeguard against further manipulation. But it can also be a barrier making cooperation more difficult; it can undermine political systems, it can weaken their capacity to solve social problems and achieve social mobilization. Social will can be paralyzed and directed towards a game between power and society understood as politics for politics' sake.

The adoption of the thesis that power is not a goal in itself facilitates a moral evaluation of politics and politicians. One can refer to criteria “independent” of politics. A politician and his politics stand a better chance of thorough verification when the criteria go beyond the exercise of power. One could employ, for instance, the criteria of virtue, political prudence, bravery, conscience or political justice. The ethical control of political behavior comes into play, yielding an interesting area for normative philosophy of politics.<sup>28</sup>

And politics requires trust even when it is not reduced to trust and communication. Trust must be based on values. Reducing politics to a technique in the game for power fails to grasp its essence. It leads to extreme relativism in the pursuance of social interests by politicians, it leads to political cynicism. Furthermore, it justifies putting self-interest above public interest in politics and makes a virtue of what is socially harmful. It raises the social costs of development. It removes politics from the Weberian conception of the equilibrium

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reasons. See: Bohdan Kaczmarek, *Spór o możliwość zbudowania socjalizmu w jednym kraju (argumenty Trockiego, Stalina i ujęcie leninowskie)*, Warszawa 1988, and especially Bohdan Kaczmarek, *Rozpad realnego socjalizmu a interesy warstwy zarządzającej. Dziś No. 2 (5)*, February 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Tadeusz Klementewicz uses the term „monument builders – shirkers”, see *Głosowanie życiem*, op.cit., p.353.

<sup>27</sup> On the political conception of a plenipotentiary see Geoffrey Brennan in the article *Ekonomia* in: R.E.Goodin, P.Pettit, *Przewodnik...* op.cit.pp.186-191. This issue is related to the derivation of the, so called, prisoner's dilemma from game theory, as evidence of the need for virtue, understood as the capacity to notice the interests of others. On the concept of political subjectivity see: Mirosław Karwat, *Człowiek polityczny. Próba interpretacji marksistowskiej*, Warszawa 1989.

<sup>28</sup> John Rawls's book *Teoria sprawiedliwości*, Warszawa 1994, is commonly considered as a classic in normative philosophy of politics inspired by analytical philosophical tradition. See also John Rawls, *Liberalizm polityczny*, Warszawa 1998, Will Kymlicka *Współczesna filozofia polityczna*, Kraków 1998.

between the ethics of responsibility and the ethics of convictions.<sup>29</sup> “Politics is like the grueling task of drilling holes in a wooden board, and it requires both passion and a good eye...”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Max Weber, *Polityka jako zawód i powołanie*, op.cit., 32 et seq.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.38.