

THE PARADOX OF POLITICS REVISITED

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The conviction that particularly political sphere abounds in permanent paradoxes, that they constitute its inherent attributes, was already familiar to political philosophy classics, although they expressed them in different ways. “The paradoxical mix of order and chaos compelled the Greeks to seek out more creative, inclusive and reflexive modes of thought and action”.¹ One of them, Socrates, talked about “the true political craft”, that is a rejection of politics, and at the same time, its admission.² The paradoxical features of politics that arise from human nature were examined by Thomas Hobbes. Jean-Jacques Rousseau observed the paradoxes that underlie the act of free will declaration. Carl Schmitt paid attention to the internal paradox of democracy, pointing out that despite the conditions of declared citizens equality, the policy is dominated by inequalities deriving from other spheres, particularly economy.³

¹ M. Chou, R. Bleiker, *The Symbiosis of Democracy and Tragedy*, “Millennium” 2009, Vol. 37, No. 3; p. 666.

² T.C. Brickhouse, N.D. Smith, *Plato’s Socrates*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

³ C. Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988, p. 13.

The contemporary literature concerning political science gladly uses the phrase “political paradox”, or “tragic”, or even “diabolic paradox”.⁴ It’s worth noting that the ideas of one, “general” paradox, reflecting the nature of politics itself, appear in that literature. On the one hand it is perceived as the consequence of the inherent conflict between the individual and the collective and of the statement that a person is nothing outside the society he or she belongs to.⁵ On the other hand, the paradox of politics originates in the same genesis – dissatisfaction of the “people” with the existing actual state, legitimized by legal institutions⁶, or with the restrictions imposed by social institutions upon their members, although they are result of their free choice.⁷ However, the “paradox of politics” framed by Paul Ricoeur in 1956, remains the most developed, inspiring and practically useful conception. His essay – inspired by Rousseau’s “social contract” – became, according to the author, the basis for his following political thought.⁸ Although it can come down to the paradox of authority wielded by social consent, but turning against the society, it is in fact manifested on every level of social structure, turning into the paradox of state and the paradox of individual.

⁴ A. Vincent, ed., *Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 182; S. Mozaffar, A. Schedler, *The Comparative Study on Electoral Governance*, “International Political Science Review” 2002, vol. 23, No. 1, p. 8; M. Symonds, J. Pudsey, *The Concept of ‘Paradox’ in the Work of Max Weber*, „Sociology” 2008; 42, No. 2.

⁵ V.H. Wallace, ed., *Paths to Peace*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957, p. 351.

⁶ J. Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics And Philosophy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

⁷ R.E. Goodin, H.-N. Klingemann (eds.), *A New Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 213.

⁸ P. Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 95–96.

1. THE PARADOX OF AUTHORITY

The paradox of authority is a permanent, inherent attribute of politics – as Ricoeur reckons.⁹ This line of thought is logical and convincing. The first premise: political authority is legitimate if it comes from an obvious consent of those who are being governed. The provision of such consent is a rational action, because it assures survival. The second premise: the practice of politics is based on submission, obligation, sometimes even on violence, which the governed in principle oppose to. The phenomenon of authority alienation merges into all political systems and all forms of governing. The conclusion – we are confronted with paradoxical phenomenon of political institutions fragility; these institutions are never free of conflict. Is it possible to liberate from it? “No” – says Ricoeur – if you want to abolish it by the assumption that once appointed state authority could gather absolute and irreversible legitimacy to its actions, or in contrary, by the complete rejection of authority. In the first case we would face the authoritarianism, already excessively experienced by the societies in their history, in the second case – with anarchy. The correct answer to the paradox of authority is constituted by democratic system but only if it is formed appropriately. For the one, „canonical” form of democracy does not exist, as well as there is no „the only one” historical truth.¹⁰

The liberal forms of political life don't satisfy all the expectations. They are inevitably marked with the struggle for power, control and domination. The permanent confrontation doesn't allow eliminating the paradox of politics, thus leaving political authority under the influence of contradictory demands posed to political institutions. On the one hand, political authority should be self-governed, based on widespread conviction about the advantage of social collaboration and the benefits that come from working for common good. On the other hand, the governed should then accept the authority that guarantees political stability, the continuity of tradition and consistency of

⁹ P. Ricoeur, “he Political Paradox”, [in:] *History and Truth*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965, pp. 247–270; D.M. Kaplan, *Ricoeur's Critical Theory*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp. 125–135.

¹⁰ B. Dauenhauer, “Elements of Ricoeur's Early Political Thought”, [in:] K. Thompson, L.E. Embree, ed., *Phenomenology of the Political*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000, pp. 67–79.

undertakings. The conflicts and arguments are inevitable even in political institutions appointed in democratic way. These are merely the conflicts or at least disputes about priority of goods that are to be distributed. What is more, democratic institutions are often damaged by the argument over the proper role, measures and the aims of government, as the accomplishment of one of the coexisting systems of values can be – and it usually is – in contradiction to the other system. Finally, democratic institutions are not able to get away from constantly reappearing conflicts and arguments over their legitimacy, since their functioning is connected with imposing the will or decisions made by some people upon the others.

The absolute elimination of conflicts isn't the task of a democratic state – Ricoeur continues. Democratic state should create and support the procedures that enable an opened discussion over them and allow conducting negotiations. Democracy is after all an undertaking that is supposed to provide the advantage of rationality over irrationality in social actions; it has to guarantee that horizontal ties – the chief imperative for surviving the community as a whole – predominate over restricted to minimum hierarchical relations between community and authority. Democracy was designed precisely to deal with paradoxes of political authority. Democratic society accepts controversies that occur among its members and institutionalizes its internal conflicts.¹¹

Ricoeur concludes that contemporary threats to the society derive to a small extent from the perspective of imposing totalitarian system upon us. To much more considerable degree it is a disappearance or at least invisibility of our participation in politics, which causes the wrong impression, that political dimension of our life is of no significance any more. Meanwhile, the expansion of politics into subsequent spheres leads back to the crucial paradox of politics: the approval for the authority, with which we more often disagree. What is more, the legitimacy of such authority may be questioned at the very beginning. The act of power takes place with the agreement of the sovereign (even if it's not the ultimate "will of the people", but the tactical agreement between political groupings or rational reconciliation of party

¹¹ P. Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, op.cit., p. 98; B. Honig, *Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory*, "American Political Science Review" 2007, Vol. 101, No. 1, pp. 1–17.

elite), thus it is deprived of the contradiction element – because it ceases to have a political character and becomes an administrative undertaking, a routine procedure of governing.¹²

The overcoming of unavoidable paradox of politics would require using the procedures analogical to the act of justice administration in the situation where the history is created and the responsibility is borne by people and nations, not by individuals. The meticulous consideration of arguments and announcement of the sentence, just like during the trial, would be necessary.¹³ This judicial metaphor emphasizes another thread of his reasoning – on the one hand, democracy is about legitimization of political authority, on the other, it is about political force and action stemming from political power.

Meanwhile, the attempts to reach the essence of power and therefore to explain the sources of authority and the attributes of might in social life, date back to at least the times and output of the above mentioned Thomas Hobbes. Following his deliberations, two traditions of analyzing this category can be pointed out: the first is connected with intentional acting – the struggle for power, the gathering of indispensable means of attaining an end, the second one, which also or even above all, treats power as the potential force – the ability to affect on others, no matter whether it's currently used or not.¹⁴ In both cases, however, the subjective approach dominates – the analysis to whom in certain community the power and authority might be attributed, and how they are being used by this person or group. The opposite approach is aimed at the object and decidedly seldom applied – it's the analysis of towards whom is this power and authority used.

The contemporary foundations of objective approach were determined by Michael Foucault. He noticed that handling the authority, wielding influence is an act that in fact constitutes the subject of power. The power manifests itself not only by the possibility of controlling the scene; it also “produces” – constitutes the objects, on which it is imposed: it creates their

¹² W.E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, pp. 137–140.

¹³ P. Ricoeur, *The Just*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 130–131, K. Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, London–New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 121–123.

¹⁴ D.H. Wrong, *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995.

description and determines the patterns of behaviour, thus settling what is, and what is not, in conformity with the norms accepted in certain *milieu*. The determination of the borderline between „normality” and „abnormality” is in addition a highly politicized process; it is inevitably connected with the privilege of rewarding and punishing – in the name of the „common” good.¹⁵ Following the Foucault’s reflections, the authority and power are no longer identified with repressive actions of sovereign subjects; it is also sought after in creative, stimulating influence of social relations, which it penetrates.¹⁶ This dispersed nature of power intensifies its complexity. In Foucault’s point of view, all analysis of power phenomenon has to begin with the assumption of the infinite number of its mechanisms: the multitude of practices, relations, techniques and discursive operations that make up the power.

No wonder that although for many researchers the category of power has superior or even symbolic value in theory of politics¹⁷, many of them simultaneously perceive it as exceptionally troublesome area of investigation, or even have serious doubts about the possibility of developing a widely accepted definition.¹⁸ Steven Lukes enumerates three reasons for this situation. Firstly, it is a primordial category – its meaning cannot be clarified by referring to other, less controversial terms. Secondly, it is the category, which sense is controversial by the definition, as every judgement of it – who legitimates the power, and who doesn’t, what constitutes the power of state, and what is a side issue – is inseparably connected with other disputable assumptions, especially those concerning what is and what isn’t important in particular situation. Thirdly, it is a category, which is the prime mover

¹⁵ M. Foucault, C. Gordon, *Power, Knowledge*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980.

¹⁶ P. Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984; G. Burchell, P. Miller, C. Gordon, *The Foucault Effect*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

¹⁷ S. Newman, *The Place of Power In Political Discourse*, “International Political Science Review” 2004, Vol. 25, No. 2.

¹⁸ K.N. Waltz, *Reflections on Theory of International Politics*, [in:] R.O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

– the way we think and act, especially in political context, is dependent on how we imagine the idea of power.¹⁹

Finally, social science is unable to defend itself against politization, because the whole knowledge of social world is contextual. As the politics can be studied only “politically”, that is, in relation to its historical determinants – political science is influenced by politization too, and therefore the deliberations on the nature of the paradox of authority can’t be impartial in the academic sense, contrary to the opinion expressed 30 years ago by Hedley Bull: “The search for conclusions that can be presented as ‘solutions’ or ‘practical advice’ is a corrupting element in the contemporary study of world politics, which property understood is an intellectual activity and not a practical one.”²⁰

2. THE PARADOX OF STATE

The state plays a crucial role in the sphere of politics; the community is able to take decisions, because it’s organized into the state and thanks to this organization the actions of community members become rational – as Ricoeur asserts.²¹ It is therefore the sign of collective rationality that always refers to the particular, historical situation. The rationality of state manifests itself in the form of institutions that function in public sphere, the state authorities and the practice, which unites the community. Rationality is at the same time the factor that constitutes and defines the state: this fact is determined by state’s ability to guarantee protection for the community against internal and external threats. Owing to this, the community can survive and form its own history. In order to achieve this aim, the state should play the role of mediator – find the compromise between the two dimensions of rationality: technological-economic rationality and socio-historical rationality. Each of them is submitted to particular rules, yet both are essential to protect and to develop the ties that consolidate the com-

¹⁹ S. Lukes, *Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds*, “Millennium” 2005, Vol. 33, No. 3.

²⁰ H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, London: Macmillan, 1977, pp. 319–320.

²¹ P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, London: Athlone, 1991, pp. 330–333.

munity. Rational state is therefore a law-governed state, which is a framework of the actions that aim at supporting the community in its ability to make decisions.

However – Ricoeur continues – there is no state in the world without government and administration, as well as there is no state without police and force. The state can be defined in terms of monopoly on using violence – but this monopoly is established in accordance with the law and it's restricted by the freedom all the individuals – members of the community – are entitled to. This freedom can also be adjusted, but not in the name of individual sacrifice for the state; on the contrary: to guarantee equal protection and equal opportunities to them. The starting point for Ricoeur is the statement that points at historical context of collective rationality; thus the question arises: shouldn't the next step concentrate on identifying the factors that in particular, historical situation lead towards reduction of the state's role? In subsequent years Ricoeur attached greater significance to the discussion on this issue in connection with the development of liberal doctrine and political philosophy that contributed to the conception of human rights. In that period of time, when his views on paradoxes of politics were shaped, the settling accounts with the Stalinist state was on an agenda. Why the eradication of the state as an instrument of repression, announced by the Marxist classics, didn't happen, if the war was declared against those to whom the repressions served? Ricoeur's answer shows the next version of paradox – this time it's the paradox of state: the less it is justified because of any reason, the more it exists – exactly for that particular reason.

The socialist state didn't stand the test of time, although its conception was based on the "strength" – and because of that. The socialist rules were at the same time a necessity – for supporting the state existence, and an obstacle – to the attempts that were aimed at its surviving. Analogical opinions on the government, which is at once essential and dysfunctional, are half century later addressed to the developed Western countries. The point is that the nation state desists from playing the role of the "lens" in which economic, political and social activity is focused; this fact has been emphasized for a decade. That role is gradually taken over by the new forces and new institutions that function on multinational, supranational, global, but also local level. However, they are incapable of fulfilling all the needs of the community and they are unable to guarantee survival and development

for the community as a whole. Some argue that nation state is redundant to “global capitalism”, which supports the expansion of multinational corporations, even though their freedom of action doesn’t translate into social and political freedom of individuals. On the other hand, the nation state is essential for societies (communities), that aspire to defend themselves against the „imperial West” and its deterritorialized economic and cultural power.²²

Many more examples of such effective opposites can be introduced. In the realities of the economy internationalization, when the crisis of welfare state proceeds and at the same time the new social needs appear, such needs can only be fulfilled by the state. Nowadays the global mechanisms regulate migrations of the rich, global transfer of information, trade policy and the diffusion of political ideas. But the state is still responsible for migrations of the poor, for education – at least at primary level, for public expenditures, and for forming infrastructure where the investments are expensive, and it takes years to make a profit. The world terrorism, organized crime, ecological problems – all these issues have global dimension. The states fight against them though, not the global institutions.

A whole lot of interpretations of contemporary dilemmas connected with the state transformation can be enumerated. The authors’ opinions differ while judging to what extent the modern state is succumbed to the internal results of the paradox of politics, to what extent it is able to overcome these results, to what extent it loses its significance, defeated by external global forces, and to what extent it is rebuilt by them – for their own interest. The conviction that the state institutions succumb the subsequent spheres of social activity to the private business has consolidated in the professional literature since the cold war geopolitics gave way to enthusiastic globalism. Although the readers preferred the popular titles that showed the “dark side” of globalization, for example those written by Benjamin R. Barber, Zygmunt Bauman or George Ritzer, other authors, with Francis Fukuyama at the head, called for rebuilding the institution of the state by the “global community”,

²² X. Zhang, *Multiplicity or Homogeneity? The Cultural-Political Paradox of the Age of Globalization*, “Cultural Critique” 2004, Fall, No. 58, pp. 33–38.

perceiving a strong state as panacea for poverty, local conflicts and threatening acts of terror.²³

Their appeals gained in significance in the year 2008. “The Return of the Nation-State”, “Great Power Politics Are Back” – these are not only just the newspapers’ slogans; they are the thesis of serious analyses. The Georgian-Russian War revealed how divided – and thus weak – is NATO, and how profound are the differences that separate the Europeans. When reacting against the war, the states paid a lot of heed to their national interests and conducted their own foreign policies. The answer to the question how to resist growing international financial crisis together, was similar – the states made attempts to save their economy on their own. And the “gas crisis” that happened in the early 2009, raised doubts again if the EU is capable of loyal cooperation. In all these cases the international institutions showed weakness, and the nation states reintroduced themselves. Especially in the face of the most crucial problem – the ongoing financial crisis – the threatened banks and companies turned for help to the governments of states, not to the international business. And along with the return of strong governments, “traditional power play between rival countries is bound to intensify”.²⁴

While carrying out an analysis of the long-term processes, the researchers agree that we face the inevitable transformation of the state institution. They seek its origins in the influence approaching from three directions. The pressure “from the top” is exerted above all by the global market with its requirements for freedom of management, universalization of culture, the expansion of international economic, military and political institutions. New social and political movements that claim cultural, political and territorial autonomy, and institutional decentralization, which is a distinctive feature of contemporary democracy, put pressure “from the bottom”. The tendencies revealed “from the side” aim at deregulation, which is reinforced by neoliberal ideology and creation of civil society in the states which were earlier deprived of such possibility.²⁵

²³ F. Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

²⁴ *Great Power Politics Are Back*, “Foreign Policy” 2009, March/April, p. 30.

²⁵ M. Keating, “Nations Without States, [in:] M. Keating, J. McGarry, ed., *Minority Nationalism and the Changing International Order*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 20–21.

May it be advisable not to look for the solution of dilemmas that come from the paradox of politics either in reconstruction of nation state, or in the renunciation of the state institution but in the attempts to bring “global state form” into being, which would assure “law and order” and extended ideological legitimation to the “global capitalism”?²⁶ Ricoeur’s deliberations show, that he would be sceptical about such ideas. In his opinion, even the most desirable, the most mature constitutional state is marked with economic violence, which turns into the conflict between particular interests of various political communities and global interests of “technoeconomics” structures. In such circumstances the preservation of identity becomes one of the crucial functions of the state in the face of growing global economy with its imperative of profit and efficiency and disrespect for local needs. The creation of the “worldwide state of law” is not desired though; what’s more, it could even be dangerous, because – in accordance with the paradox of politics – the authority with worldwide range, possessing modern means of force, would constitute a hazard to the survival of the whole community, which brought it into existence.²⁷

The problem concerning the survival of mankind and the natural environment – the most important, existential issue of contemporary politics – has to remain a domain of independent nation states. In this context, Ricoeur was more interested in the relations between justice and politics, than in the relations between politics and economy. He asked the following questions: if we accept liberal democracy as the global model of social development, then how can we define responsibility of the individual towards the group, member of the community towards its other members, the citizen towards the state? In order to find the answer to these questions we have to look at the paradox of politics from another point of view, which is imposed precisely by the global perspective.

Four attributes of contemporary globalization processes attract the attention here. Interdependence is the first and the most important one. Globalization consists on growing mutual interconnections and it’s driven by combination of different spheres of social practice that constitute the society. Transborderism is the second attribute. Globalization undermines the

²⁶ X. Zhang, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

²⁷ D.M. Kaplan, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

role of territoriality as the foundation of democracy, which was previously related to the state. In order to maintain democratic forms of social life nowadays, more initiatives and collective decisions have to be put forward that show political results beyond the state borders. Asymmetry is the third attribute. The protection of democracy also demands that the unstoppable globalization of economy should be supplemented with globalization of politics, which is difficult to implement; not by imparting the global character to the politics of the individual states but by transferring the decision making process to the supranational level. At last, the fourth attribute of globalization is provoking direct commitment of the individuals – members of the community – in politics in the situation where state institutions subordinate (or rather submissive) to corporation networks and bureaucratic systems are not sufficient to oppose the threats that come from global interdependence and conflicts. Since famous, vulgarized, but still popular thesis of Samuel Huntington and the following inquiries of Anthony Giddens were introduced, these threats used to be encapsulated in the category of challenges that historically shaped forms of both individual and collective identity are confronted with. And thus the circle is closed.

Ricoeur's thoughts about the sense of paradox of politics are perfectly complemented by William E. Connolly's view. In his opinion central paradox of politics concerns the relation between identity and otherness. The more they are mutually desirable, the more politics merges into social life. In other words: the shaping of identity requires indicating or creating the otherness and that's the role of politics, of political measures.²⁸ Connolly reckons that the practice of democracy shows three features while dealing with the problems connected with relation between identity and otherness: it confirms the indispensability of identity in social life and it prevents from its dogmatization, but it also strengthens the interdependence of identity and otherness. In agonistic democracy, the social sphere, where the rival identities are able to develop, is most efficiently shaped with political measures; in globalized world of dense interdependence these are in addition the only measures capable of assuring the place where that sphere may come into

²⁸ *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002; A. Abizadeh, *Does Collective Identity Pre-suppose an Other?*, "American Political Science Review", Vol. 99, No. 1.

being. Furthermore, the diversities essential to confirm the identity are not closed within the area of territorial state at that time, on the contrary, they easily cross the state borders.

The formula of paradox with reference to interdependence of identity and diversity frequently reappears in Connolly's reasoning: either as a statement that consolidation of identity occurs as a result of forming otherness, or that the existence of diversity both determines and threatens the identity, or that identity as normality requires abnormality. Identity is what I am – says Connolly – and how I am perceived. Identity is created in the relation towards a set of differences, which were socially accepted. The strengthening of identity requires identifying the differences that function in the network of social practice, and then transforming them into diversity; it is therefore a dangerous experience, prone to the reaction and “retaliation” of the constituted “others”. The existence of diversity is therefore both prerequisite of identity and a threat to identity; and forming the identity requires pluralisation and politization – that is, it requires politics.²⁹ Globalization is more and more evidently in favour of that, by transferring historically shaped centres of identification and creating new identities, which are more politicized, pluralistic and varied³⁰, and in that way the circle is closed again. Or maybe those are right, according to whom the new telecommunications techniques lead to emerge “communicative capitalism”, where only one difference matters: between what is public – and therefore well-known – and what is attempted to be kept in secret – thus creating the favoured circle of the „insiders”. As Jodi Dean argues: “publicity and secrecy provide the matrix through which we think about democracy”³¹

²⁹ W.E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference...*, op.cit., p. 64–66.

³⁰ S. Hall, „The Question of Cultural Identity”, [in:] S. Hall, D. Held, T. McGrew, ed., *Modernity and its Future*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 309.

³¹ J. Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 4.

3. THE PARADOX OF INDIVIDUAL

The thread of rationality and of rational acting was running through both fields we have been dealing with up to this moment. The paradox of politics is clearly visible here as well. Ricoeur points out that above all we have to distinguish between political rationality and socio-economic rationality. The first one concerns using traditions, customs and historical actions of the community, the second one – managing the sphere of material reproduction, work organization and consumption. Each of these spheres has a different logic; in economy the ruthless logic of calculation is binding, in politics the sentiments are possible. In economy, the rationality is imposed by global market, in politics the unique superiority complex that comes from the strength given by the power, easily introduces the factor of irrationality to the action.³² What's more, rationality of ones, opposed to the rationality of others – provided it really guides them – may lead to the results different than expected by both sides. It's just like in classic prisoner's dilemma: „when we get into conflicts with other people, rules that serve us so well that it is scarcely worth while identifying them when confronting 'nature' (which does not have preferences of its own) give us poor results when confronting people, who *do* have preferences.”³³

But these are not the only problems. If legality of the authority derives from the rational agreement provided by the community trying to survive in hostile environment, then de-subjecting of politics and social processes as a result of creation of contemporary “network society” effectively abolishes this assumption. What is a rational decision then and who actually makes it? Is it possible that blurring of decision subject and subjects of authority will become another component of postmodern “risk society”, more and more defenceless in the face of threats it is confronted with? Is Weber's dilemma of ethics of conviction – striving after what is desired, and ethics of responsibility – aiming at what is possible, gaining significance? Such seeds of doubt can be endlessly planted.

³² P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action...*, op.cit., p. 327; “The Political Paradox”, op.cit., pp. 259–261.

³³ M. Nicholson, *Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 65.

This time Pierre Moessinger comes to Ricoeur's aid. In opposition to the adherents of the theory of rational choice, he proves that collective actions don't have to be the result of rational decision of the individuals that participate in these actions. The stability of social structures comes from the link between nonrational individual behaviour and the established social order. Moreover, the accent here isn't put on "irrational", but on "nonrational" behaviour – as research shows, it is ubiquitous on individual level and the reasoning assuming rationality enables to analyze the social order only in the context of abstract models that encapsulate this order metaphorically – as the existing equilibrium or desired optimum. Describing social order as stability and associating disorder with conflict is unjustified.³⁴

Moessinger puts forward the following thesis: the social order, but also the examples of disorder, instability and lack of social equilibrium, come from nonrational behaviour. The behaviour which is impossible to be reduced to rational choice has in practice huge and empirically proved meaning – and it can't be rejected. As "macro level" often turns out to be more organized than "micro level", the most general explanation is the development of order (collective, social, political) as a result of nonrational behaviour of individuals (members of the community). In other words, the combination of irrational behaviour of individuals creates the social order, which in turn determines individual nonrationality. Individual experiences and internal conflicts, indecisiveness, previous commitment, lack of will-power, ill will, hypocrisy, lack of personal integrity, yearning for reduction of disparity, naivety, uncertainty as far as behaviour of other people is concerned and difficulties in understanding their reasons, can be enumerated among the causes of nonrational behaviours. Moessinger concludes that order and disorder are two inseparable aspects of functioning of the society. What weakens social ties in one social system can strengthen them in another; the conflicts may become the source of integration of the society, they may rebind particular components of social system. The social order favours disorder in people's minds, the order generally favours lack of order.³⁵ It is indeed a far reaching approach, especially when compared with tradi-

³⁴ P. Moessinger, *The Paradox of Social Order*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1999.

³⁵ As above, p. 73–134.

tional convictions that consent of individuals conditions the legitimization of government.³⁶

Properly directed, democratic politics is therefore *conditio sine qua non* for preserving individualism, but it can't overwhelm it. The history shows a lot of examples of "smothering" the freedom of individuals by too active and organized democracy; nowadays we point at globalization, which means submission to corporate and bureaucratic structures in everyday life. Nevertheless, individualism is a tremendous power that creates social space for itself through opposition and objection to bureaucratic pressure and institutions; in extreme cases an individual may even wipe out the community, which could help, if acting in accordance with appropriate rules.³⁷

Paul Ricoeur examines this problem more carefully from the angle of his paradox of politics. Politics should transform individuals into citizens – he claims – and enhance their civic maturity, which in the name of common good enables the acceptance, and thus legitimization of political institutions. The dilemmas of contemporary human being are rooted in the conflict triggered by modern socio-technological order. The individuals are obliged to participate in it to survive, but simultaneously it undermines and ruins the core of historical communities, connected with their collective identity. In such a way, the new rationality of technocapitalism competes with old rationality of common cultural and political life. It results with a dilemma – how to reconcile your own views with civic obedience to the authority³⁸, and more and more people tend to get away from both mentioned spheres to their own individualized, private world.³⁹

Discouragement from the politics leads therefore to escape from politics, which is more often accompanied by decidedly negative attitude towards politicians who are largely self-serving, and towards institutions that are subordinate to powerful impenetrable interests.⁴⁰ However, in that situation

³⁶ S. Näsström, *The Legitimacy of the People*, "Political Theory" 2007; Vol. 35; No. 5.

³⁷ W.E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference...*, op.cit., p. 83–87; C.F. Alford, *Group Psychology and Political Theory*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

³⁸ I. Chowcat, *Moral Pluralism, Political Justification and Deliberative Democracy*, "Political Studies" 2000, Vol. 48.

³⁹ D.M. Kaplan, op.cit., p. 127.

⁴⁰ C. Hay, *Why We Hate Politics*, Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

the meaning of politics as a main factor that shapes – from outside, so to speak *ex cathedra* – the social roles, the benefits, the duties and the responsibility of the individuals, becomes more significant. Even if we are not engaged in typically political actions – says Ricoeur – the state continuously embraces all the spheres which we ought to be loyal.⁴¹

Being more and more strongly discouraged from politics, we dissociate ourselves from it rapidly and more and more consequently. But we can't get away from the paradox, which causes that in globalizing world the politics embraces and concerns us more and more as well – even against our will.

⁴¹ P. Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, op.cit., p. 103.