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Joachim Lelewel's Idea of Republicanism in the Context of the "Distinctness" of the Archetype of Polish Political Culture

Summary

When examining Polish political thought, one cannot help but notice that what engages Polish thinkers in reflection on the state and society is the problem of freedom. This is a characteristic feature of Polish political thought and is responsible for the special nature of the heritage of Polish political culture. In the secondary literature, the idea even appears that – historically – the fate of Poland and Polish people in the cultural, intellectual, and political spheres can be understood as, on the one hand, a reflection on the “republican paradigm” characteristic of Polish culture, and on the other, as this paradigm’s impact (positive or negative) on the history of Poland and Poles. The goal of this article is to attempt to explain the idea of republicanism in the socio-political thought of Joachim Lelewel. In the article, we propose the thesis that if – according to assumptions accepted by scholars – the archetype of every nation is, by definition, unchanging and untranslatable into any other archetype, and Lelewel defines it as republican, then in his view: firstly, Polish republicanism is distinct from European republicanism; and secondly, political life in Poland can only be organized within the bounds of the “republican paradigm.”

The success of Poland depends upon whether the value of this paradigm will be recognized. However paradoxical it may sound, the requirement for “strong rule” in Poland consists in taking into account the “republican soul” of Poles. We also point to the issue – raised by Lelewel – of the fundamental “distinctness” of the archetype of Polish political culture (which is subsumed within the “republican paradigm”) from the archetype of European culture.

KEYWORDS

republicanism, Joachim Lelewel, socio-political freedom, Poland and Europe, Christian civilization.

IDEA REPUBLIKANIZMU JOACHIMA LELEWELA
W KONTEKŚCIE „ODMIENNOŚCI” ARCHETYPU POLSKIEJ
KULTURY POLITYCZNEJ

Badając polską myśl polityczną, nie sposób nie zauważyć, że tym, co łączy refleksję polskich myślicieli nad państwem i społeczeństwem, jest problem wolności. Jest on wyróżnikiem polskiej myśli politycznej i stanowi o szczególnym charakterze dorobku polskiej kultury politycznej. Pojawia się nawet sformułowanie, iż koleje losów Polski i Polaków zarówno w sferze kulturowo-intelektualnej, jak i będącej z nią w koniecznym związku historii politycznej, można ująć jako z jednej strony refleksję nad charakterystycznym dla polskiej kultury „paradygmatem republikańskim”, a z drugiej jako jego oddziaływanie (pozytywne lub negatywne) na dzieje Polski i Polaków. Celem tego artykułu jest próba zrozumienia idei republikanizmu w myśli społeczno-politycznej Joachima Lelewela, który jest wyrazicielem i apologetą „paradygmatu republikańskiego”. W artykule zostaje postawiona teza, iż jeżeli – w myśl przyjętych przez badaczy założeń – archetyp kultury każdego narodu na mocy pojęcia jest niezmienny i nieprzekładalny na inny archetyp, a Lelewel ujmuje go jako republikański – to w jego ujęciu – po pierwsze; republikanizm polski jest odmienny od republikanizmu europejskiego, po drugie życie polityczne w Polsce można organizować wyłącznie w ramach „paradygmatu republikańskiego”. Od uznania wartości tego paradygmatu zależy powodzenie Polski. Jakkolwiek brzmi to paradoksalnie: warunkiem „silnej władzy”, stabilnej i skutecznej, jest uwzględnienie przez nią „republikańskiej duszy Polaków”. Autorka wskazuje również na podnoszony przez Lelewela problem fundamentalnej „odmienności” archetypu polskiej kultury politycznej, którą tworzy „paradygmat republikański”, od archetypu kultury Europy.

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republikanizm, Lelewel, wolność społeczno-polityczna, Polska a Europa, cywilizacja chrześcijańska

The heritage of Polish political culture, including both models of the polity (*ustrój*)¹ and an understanding of the political sphere, was developed in the age of the “nobles’ democracy” (*demokracja szlachecka*).² Secondary literature accepts that Poles’ political identities were (and continue to be) defined by their relation to the models of political culture developed by the noble elite of the nation – a relation most fully expressed in Polish political romanticism. Although this heritage may be subject to criticism, its importance cannot be undermined, as it was (and continues to be) the only model functioning in the Polish consciousness of an individual’s relationship to the state, and thus in the Polish public sphere. Setting aside for now the overall concept of republicanism with its numerous nuances, certain similarities of this doctrine in Polish and European political thought can be indicated: the idea of the common good, the fusion of non-monarchic institutions with a catalogue of civic virtues, the postulate of a government founded on virtue, the fear of a loss of freedom. The political life of the old Republic was without a doubt centered on the postulate of achieving and defending socio-political freedom. The ideology of the Republicans,³ who opposed hereditary succession to the throne, is the most extreme expression of this defense. Republican rhetoric appears in “anti-successionist” literature: fear of the tyranny and despotism brought on by monarchy; the danger of a loss of freedom and rights (which would occur with the establishment of a hereditary monarchy); an apotheosis of republican virtues – independence (sovereignty) and honor; and their presentation as civic virtues [Haakonssen 1998, p. 725; Lis 2011, p. 426]. Comparative works discussing the ideological outline

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- 1 The Polish term “ustrój” – in the broad sense presented here – does not have an exact equivalent in the English language. “Polity” was chosen instead of the usual translation “political system” so as not to be limited to an understanding that only takes into account the reigning system. “Ustrój” – a broader term semantically than either “political system,” or “polity” – refers to both the actual system and, in this case, also to a certain political constitution of the citizens [L.F.].
 - 2 Both “gentry democracy” and “nobles’ democracy” are used to express the Polish idea of “demokracja szlachecka” [L.F.].
 - 3 The name of „Republicans” is given to opponents of hereditary monarchy, who made use of republican rhetoric. This includes (among others) Seweryn Rzewuski, Szczęsny Potocki, Wojciech Turski, Adam Wawrzyniec Rzewuski, and Leonard Wołczkiewicz Olizar. Cf. Lis 2012a.

of European and Polish republican thought present an interesting research perspective and seem promising [Lis 2012b].

It must be emphasized that the conduit of the rhetoric of political freedom was, however, the entire nobility, whose political consciousness developed as a result of its struggles with the aristocracy and king [Siemieński 1932, p. 121]. Apprehension of the monarchic element, which threatened the identity of Polish political culture, accompanied the “nobles’ democracy” throughout the entire period of its reign, reaching its height in the decadent phase of the existence of the Polish state. In secondary literature, the idea appears that the entire intellectual and political legacy of Polish political culture is subsumed within the “republican paradigm,” which Joachim Lelewel⁴ – creator of the first and most significant (from the point of view of studies on Poland and Poles) historical synthesis, *Uwagi nad dziejami Polski i ludu jej* (*Comments on the History of Poland and Her People* [L.F.]; 1855) – praised, and was the first to elaborate.

The goal of this article is to attempt to explain the idea of republicanism in the socio-political thought of Joachim Lelewel. In the

4 „Lelewel’s thought is and was associated unambiguously. His conception is, and was interpreted as the idea of republicanism” [Kaute 1993, p. 8]. For this reason, in the present article, the phrase “Polish republicanism” (in quotation marks) references “republicanism in the thought of J. Lelewel.” Scholars seem to agree that the entirety of Lelewel’s reflection on the history of Poland amounts to an apotheosis of the republican element and a chronicle of his struggles with the monarchic element. In 1928, Lelewel published *Dziesięć upłynionych wieków dawnej Polski czyli chronologia do obrazu dziejów polskich* (*Ten Past Centuries of Old Poland or a Chronology to the Picture of Polish History*). Already in this sketch, H.M. Serajski notices a „mechanism differentiating primitive, Polish society, as well as a struggle between two basic political elements: the spirit of republicanism and the spirit of monarchism, and thus the dynamics of the historical development of Poland are sketched, which the author will deepen and develop in his successive works” [Serajski 1953, p. 28]. Andrzej Walicki also mentions Lelewel’s republicanism [Walicki 2000, p. 24, 28]. The label of “Republican” was given to the historian already during his lifetime. In his roles of member of the Board of Administration (*Rada Administracji*) and National Government (*Rząd Narodowy*), Lelewel was attacked by the right wing of the government many times for his “republican ideas;” he tried to gain the support of the petty and middle nobility (*drobna i średnia szlachta*) for an insurgence, since they constituted – in his opinion – the leading power behind “ideas of freedom” (*idee wolnościowe*) and indicated the need for the nobility to become aware of the necessity of agrarian reform and its voluntary implementation. Cf. Nowak 1988.

first part of the article, we adopt and develop the assumptions of scholars dealing with Lelewel's concept of Polish political culture, and make use of the category of archetype as the most fertile (for explanatory purposes) in studies on the political culture and problem of political identity of Poles. In the article, we propose the thesis that if – according to assumptions accepted by scholars – the archetype of every nation is, by definition, unchanging and untranslatable into any other archetype, and Lelewel defines it as republican, then in his view: firstly, Polish republicanism is distinct from European republicanism; and secondly, political life in Poland can only be organized within the bounds of the “republican paradigm.” An analysis of republicanism is meant to show what the “distinctness” of Poland from Europe is based upon, and what consequences this has on the level of the functioning of society; in other words, in the line of argument a permanent picture of Polish society as the historian saw it emerges. This paper can also be read as an indication as to the possibility of establishing strong rule⁵ in Poland, however paradoxical it may sound: the requirement for “strong rule” in Poland consists in taking into account the “republican soul” of Poles. A “love of freedom,” in Lelewel's view, created an environment in which a type of citizen of the highest political virtue developed – a strong individual devoted to the “common cause.” Upholding these “imponderabilia” of Polish political culture is the core message of his civilian pedagogy.

We thus propose to examine the intellectual and political legacy of Poland as a cultural archetype comprised of institutions, a hierarchy of values and norms recognized by society, the method of achieving these values and norms, and – what cannot be disregarded – “dispositions,” “tendencies,” and “abilities,” or the national character viewed from a psychological perspective [Kaute 1993, p. 37]. The archetype of Polish political culture underlies the entire sphere of political life; it is expressed in the polity (*ustrój*), laws, as well as in the spectrum of possible references to them. The archetype comprises the national Constitution in the broadest, most basic sense of the word. Therefore,

5 „Rule” is used here in the most general sense possible (Polish *władztwo*); it does not, by any means, imply the implementation of a strong, centralized government, which would be in conflict with Joachim Lelewel's political ideas [L.F.].

we are not speaking merely of the polity (*ustrój*) in the narrow sense of the term, but rather about what secondary literature calls the “polity paradigm” (*paradygmat ustrojowy*) [Kaute 1993, p. 119]. In this (and only in this) sense, the paradigm of Poland is republicanism, which may be achieved via the polity (*ustrój*) – republic, but it may also serve as a reference point for all action within a monarchical system, or *monarchia mixta*.⁶ The idea of republicanism, *res publica* in the present article, will be treated as a cultural archetype, with culture understood as an expression of the “national spirit” – according to Lelewel, a “republican, civilian spirit,” “a spirit of freedom.” “The qualities of the Slavic tribe” are a “love of statehood and freedom,” and – ultimately, it was the “spirit of freedom which sustained and arranged the national edifice,” so in studies on Poland and Poles⁷

6 In Lelewel’s take, the institutions of the Republic are secondary to a certain type of Polish political culture, which expresses itself in them and can be seen in the practical functioning of the polity (*ustrój*). In this sense, the paradigm of Poland is the republic. From this perspective, the recognition of the office of king, whose role in the republican paradigm is reduced to executing the will of the “masses,” the defense of its freedom, need not be surprising. Since the monarch’s action is completely legitimized in the will of the “commons,” “people,” “masses,” the basis of the commons’ obedience to the king is not the slavery of the “office,” but a love of his person. In this sense, as Wojciech Kaute writes, “the monarchy in Poland is but a facade” [Kaute 1993, p. 76-77, 119]. To Lelewel, the institutions of the Republic “opened the door to efforts that could preserve and save her [Poland – A.P.B.],” but “only a moral weakening, and with it a loss of virtue prepared the country and its institutions’ downfall” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 462]. Polish republicanism [here: Lelewel’s thought] – often in a way that is not intended, nor well thought-out – draws from the classical republican tradition of forming the political *paideia* within the human being (political virtue). The thesis can be proposed (though this is in need of further study) that the institutional aspect in Polish republicanism is secondary. It is clearly indicated that institutions do not secure freedom. Lelewel holds that the institutions of the Republic are good, because they guarantee political freedom; they do not, however, by themselves protect the state from its downfall, which can only be done by the “republican spirit,” the “civic ethos.” This is why nurturing the political virtues of the entire civic society and each individual separately is of the utmost importance – because each individual will do a better job of securing freedom than the “best legislation.”

7 Lelewel’s reflection on „Poles,” or the „Slavic tribe” extends in its relevance beyond the concept of national character – here we have in mind the reception of political culture, a product of the national spirit, and the archetype, which – though it “developed over the centuries” – achieved its fullness in

it is good to recognize their without exaggeration easy, unforced movements the fruit of independence and freedom: simplicity with solemnity, courtesy with republican *rubaszność*⁸ [Lelewel 1855b, p. 279].

Secondly, looking at Polish political culture as an archetype, we notice its specificity, distinctness, or even, indeed, its untranslatability into an archetype of another culture. Jan Adamus, an eminent scholar of Polish culture, writes:

the central problem of Polish history was and is, perhaps, the problem of the specificity of the course of Poland, which led in a way opposite to the rest of Europe [Adamus 1958, p. 280].

Therefore, we assert not so much this culture's individuality, as its fundamental distinctness from the European model. While studying the "national spirit" (in accordance with Romantic methodology, which coined the phrase), so juxtaposing it with another "spirit", we must accept the analyzed material as the point of departure. The internal elaboration of a cultural archetype is its immanent analysis, its vivisection. The assumption of a different, external, point of departure would mean defining it in the categories of another spirit,⁹ imposing foreign standards on the national "spirit," while the point is to look at it through the lens of "Polishness." Then, as Lelewel writes about Poles, "the mediocrity of their talents is illusory, because their customs and concepts are not in accordance with those, which foreign civilizations impose upon them;" though

lagging behind in regards to that material civilization, which Western parties pursue, in social and civilian organization, which ensures

the epoch of *gminowładztwo szlacheckie* ("power of the noble commons"); in the *Comments...* this period encompasses the years between 1374 and 1607.

8 A sort of jovial coarseness [L.F.].

9 In the second half of the nineteenth century, an attempt at evaluating the "Polish spirit" from the perspective of the „spirit of Europe," where the European model of the modern state governed by the "rule of law" becomes the point of departure (criterion of evaluation) of the old Republic (in which "unfortunately this arrangement was unable to be completed") is undertaken by M. Bobrzyński in his famous synthesis of Polish history, *Dzieje Polski w zarysie* (*An Outline of the History of Poland* [L.F.] 1879) [Bobrzyński 1986, p. 48].

their happiness, they have surpassed a great many nations [Lelewel 1855b, p. 276].

The observation of the distinctness of Poland from the East and West is a permanent element of Polish political thought,¹⁰ regardless of whether the national paradigm is perceived apologetically, or whether it is evaluated critically; in other words, there is no way out from the archetype.¹¹ In Lelewel, of course, the “distinctness” of Poles is valued positively, “accepting the etiquette of Western parties they donned it with an air of dignity; if they adopted anything of the pomp or humility of the East, they ennobled it and effaced its origin” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 279].

Thirdly, after taking into account the distinctness of the history and “spirit” of Poland, which becomes visible when it is juxtaposed with the history of Europe, the distinguishing features of the archetype of Polish political culture seem to be – according to Joachim Lelewel – the imperative of morality in politics and the achievement of freedom in Poland, which reached a scale unknown to Europe and the world. Thus, the “republican paradigm” appears here as particular (*swoisty*) and original;

only one nobility – [that] of the Polish nation – took the idea of freedom and developed a broad republic, which was the first to do so on Earth. There were urban and burgher republics in antiquity and in the Middle Ages; powerful capital cities of the reigning republics; republican federations of cities, free cantons, alliances of small, republican lands; but only Poland developed itself into an extensive and national republic [Lelewel 1855b, p. 173].

10 The problem of Poland’s distinctness – as Jan Adamus indicates – is a permanent element of Poles’ self-reflection. All of the leading syntheses of Polish history point out this distinctness, both “optimistic” ones – including Joachim Lelewel’s preeminent synthesis, *Comments on the History of Poland and Her People* (1855), and the most famous “pessimistic” reply to it – M. Bobrzyński’s *An Outline of the History of Poland*. Cf. Sobieski 1963.

11 The „distinctness” of the republican spirit, a spirit of freedom, from the “spirit of Europe” is best expressed by Adam Mickiewicz, who grasps and relays it in the everlasting, imperishable forms of artistic genius, thus expressing to the fullest the essence of the archetype of Polish culture, which is discussed further in the article.

Lelewel points out the distinctness of his native, republican paradigm:

Poland presents a beautiful sight, from its foundation different from that of all other republics, which shone at various times in history [Lelewel 1855b, p. 173].

This paradigm is pioneering and precedes European republican thought,

as many times as I have examined the Slavic past throughout the course of my life, I have always been awed by its own, native elements (*żywioły*)¹². Not one of them in the so-called West is just today being exalted and sought after, centuries ago they constituted the foundation of the luminous East [Lelewel 1956, p. 203],

because the Republic “upraised and established principles for which old Europe strives, to rejuvenate and better the condition of its inhabitants” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 173], and – what is important from the point of view of republican rhetoric – this paradigm is constantly threatened “by foreign influence the beautiful element (*żywioł*) became dislocated and oppressed, it lives nonetheless in the mind and soul” [Lelewel 1956, p. 203].

To accurately problematize the polity paradigm (*paradygmat ustrojowy*) of the Republic, it is imperative to analyze the concept of “freedom” and corollary idea of “equality” in light of the postulate of uniting politics and morality. This presence of this postulate (elaborated by ancient philosophy) within the archetype of Polish political culture also attests to the distinctness of Poland from modern Europe, which is permeated by Italian political realism that breaks apart this union¹³. The problem that stands before the scholar who juxtaposes “Polish republicanism” with contemporary European republicanism is the presence – in the political literature of the old Republic – of the postulates of freedom and equality taken from the perspective of the premises of classical political philosophy. These premises concern

12 “*Żywioły*” can also be understood here to mean „forces” [L.F.].

13 More on the reception of N. Machiavelli's political thought and its role in constructing modern views on the political sphere can be found in P. Manent's book, *Intelektualna historia liberalizmu* (*An Intellectual History of Liberalism*; Manent 1994).

the concept of the political nature of man (*mikrokosmos, dzoon politikon*) and the comprehension of his essence from the perspective of laws ordering reality, including the political community (*kosmos*). In Lelewel's view, the postulates of freedom and equality – both from a political and social perspective – are not synonymous, though they are also not specialized enough ideas for them to be described alone, sometimes it is indeed impossible to differentiate between them. Though a separation of the postulates of freedom and equality is not possible here, it is certain that both are derived from the adoption of the imperative of morality in politics, and that all political activeness of the citizen requires the fulfillment of both.

According to Lelewel, the phenomenon of Poland is not a result of the sheer quantity of the nobility, but rather of the quality of its political culture, which presented a unique model of the individual's position in society and in the state – a model that made an exceptional contribution to culture and civilization. The problem of “equality” is tied with a special type of relation between the individual and the community, where the first segment – “individual” – refers to the citizen understood organically or functionally (i.e. from the perspective of the whole), while the second segment is “community” understood as something more than just a “multiplication of individuals” (a collective); it is a Republic.

Do not differentiate between the sons of Poland – appeals Lelewel – whether he speaks the Russian or Polish or Lithuanian tongue; whatever his denomination, since he takes action with you, acts in the name of the people, walk with him as with a brother, take him in, because the point is [to act – L.F.] together [Lelewel 1964, p. 437-438].

Both the understanding of “citizen” and Republic are anti-liberal for Lelewel. *Res publica* maintains a higher ontological status than the individual, bestowing sense and meaning upon the latter. The measure of a citizen's dignity was neither his wealth, nor his social status, but rather his merits on behalf of the Republic – which guaranteed the equality of the entire nobility before the law.¹⁴ According to Lelewel,

¹⁴ This is the polity paradigm (*paradygmat ustrojowy*) that expresses the archetype of Polish political culture. The adequate, or inadequate (even caricatured) realization of this model is up for discussion, which Lelewel undertakes,

this republican equality of all elements composing the Republic was a factor which provoked harmony, not anarchy in Polish political life (as the monarchic tradition from Naruszewicz to Szujski held), since it allowed culturally and religiously diverse elements to merge into a unified standard of high politicized societal life.

In conversation, a Russian speaking his own tongue and a German-speaking citizen of Gdańsk sat down equally with citizens of the purest Sandomierzan speech. In the Senate, bishops gave counsel along with numerous heretics. This did not break up common deliberations; it facilitated a union of nations and eased particularistic spats. In Greater and Lesser Poland Hussitism, Lutheranism, Calvinism and Socinianism made themselves at home; everything made itself at home in Lithuania, where Disunionists¹⁵ and Muslims also peacefully remained within the bounds of civic equality [Lelewel 1855b, p. 363-364].

In this sense, the archetype of Polish political culture proposes a functional understanding of the citizen, where his function is the meaning of the part (citizen – *mikrokosmos*) in relation to the whole (Republic – *kosmos*). What guaranteed freedom, then, was the Republic, not the rights of autonomous individuals. Individual citizens take action of their own free will on behalf of the common good – the good of the Republic, a part of which is composed of individual rights, which are the same for all [Kaute 1993, p. 59]. On the one hand, the community is above the individual, on the other hand – the catalogue of individual freedoms is central to the idea of the Republic.

This is the archetype from which – according to Lelewel – there is no way out. It is enclosed within the idea of equality, of *gminowładztwo*

devoting an entire chapter of his synthesis entitled *Gminowładztwo szlacheckie w zawichrzeniu nadużywa* (*Abuses of the "Power of the Noble Commons" in the Period of Demise*) to a critique of the practice of political life in the Republic. However, this bitter, critical reflection in no way (lessens the significance) of the "republican paradigm" itself.

- 15 Disunionists (Polish "Dyzunicy") – a group of Polish Eastern Orthodox Christians opposed to the Union of Brest, that did not submit to the Pope. This name was chosen by me arbitrarily, since I could not find an adequate existing name for this group in English [L.F.].

(the “power of the commons”¹⁶), that is to say – universal consent for the rule of citizens, who do not have to be forced to act on behalf of the common good from above by an administrative apparatus that grants them freedom thanks to its institutions. Just as the individual-community opposition is absent in Lelewel’s thought (functional conception of the citizen), there is also no opposition between the collective and its rulers, because the division between rulers and ruled is absent. Both dichotomies are abolished by the Lelewelian archetype of political culture, a political culture that gives freedom to all those (all of the *stany sejmujące* – estates of the diet – and each individual separately), who posit the law while simultaneously adhering to it.

To summarize, in the archetype of Polish political culture, which expresses itself in the postulates of freedom and equality, it is not possible for “servitude in general” to exist: there is no such thing as unconditional obedience of the citizens to a ruling power, or of one citizen to another; it is always conditional. To look at it from the perspective of “Polishness:” the archetype of Polish political culture does away with the ruler-ruled relationship (the aspect of political freedom) and the master-servant relationship¹⁷ present in

16 In the thought of the author of *Comments on the History of Poland and Her People*, this category functions in two, closely-related aspects, Firstly, it is understood as a particular paradigm of the national polity (*ustrój*), in contrast to the monarchic paradigm. Secondly, it is understood as a particular relationship between the individual and the community, which – in turn – is in contrast to the relationship elaborated by the modern philosophy of politics. The idea of *gminowładztwo* (the “power of the commons”) is a recurring motive in the discussion on Poland and Poles; it appears in nineteenth and twentieth century discussions on the Polish political polity (*ustrój*), in the political thought of the nationalist movement, among others. Jan Ludwik Popławski held that the socio-political paradigm of the polity (*ustrój*) is an “assembly” (*gromada*). This paradigm disappeared within the privileged class, but was preserved in the Polish people, who retain a sense of “tribal kinship” that he called the “sense of assembly” (*poczucie gromadzkie*). The “sense of assembly” is a particular kind of relationship of the individual to the community, where the individual maintains his individuality (because he fuses it with the “assembly,” which he is not a component of, but rather the foundation.) Popławski contrasts this model of the functioning of the community in Poland with the European model of the liberal, modern state. Cf. Bończa-Tomaszewski 2001, p. 60 et al.

17 Lelewel does not accept the thesis that the feudal system ever existed fully in Poland. “The conditions of feudality are foreign to Poland. The characteristics

the archetype of European culture. This is in accordance with the rhetoric and conception of European republicanism, which posits precisely those two postulates: the abolishment of societal servitude (the citizen is neither a master, nor a servant) and the abolishment of citizens' unconditional obedience to a ruling power. It seems, however, that the postulates of "Polish republicanism" are derived from other premises; they are grounded in a definition of the political sphere different from the European definition. This definition of the internal order of the *polis* is key. The fundamental premise underlying the (distinct from Europe) differentiation of relationships in the socio-political sphere is the identification of the Polish archetype of political culture with "Christian civilization," whose essence may be grasped only in confrontation with the European cultural archetype. In the European archetype – as Adam Mickiewicz declares –

in an idolatric mix of languages, the name of civilization is given to fashionable and elegant attire, delicious cuisine, comfortable taverns, beautiful theaters, and wide roads [Mickiewicz 1956, p. 39-40].

The archetype of Polish political culture appears here as an antidote for the "mistakes of Europe," to paraphrase the Cracovian historical school;

if a nation faring well and eating and drinking well is to be most highly respected, then respect amongst yourselves those who are fattest and healthiest. Even animals have these qualities [of European civilization – A.P.B.], but for a human they do not suffice. (...) For

and conditions of feudality are: 1 dependence and personal servitude universal to everyone and arranged by degrees, from the most wretched slave to the ruler. None are free there: free is the wretched soul expelled from such company. Direct vassals of the first and second degree, barons and further *arrieres vasseaux*, banarets, there are liege men, bound, vassals and servants, to their masters mutually bound one to the other in servitude like direct vassals of the crown to the ruler. Such gradation entangles itself in mutual, personal obligations of service, creating an order-less fabric in which the ruler himself becomes subject to vassalage. 2. No unconditional property nor estate, everyone leases another's land, the ruler is its named owner. Everyone gives and receives investiture on lease, receives or pays homage. The land, or *feudum*, pays off the service personally owed being endowed with a feudal investiture. In such a state of social affairs (*towarzyskość*), there are no officeholders who would not become vassals" [Lelewel 1855b, p. 122].

civilization that is truly worthy of human beings must be Christian [Mickiewicz 1956, p. 40].

The higher ontological status of the archetype of Polish political culture expresses itself – according to Mickiewicz (and Lelewel) – in the unfoundedness of accentuating the differences between people, who are equal citizens of the *civitas dei*.¹⁸ In the paradigm of Polish culture, humans live in a finite world, a world of half-truth. Man is helpless against transcendence, so none of the “things of this world” can in any way differentiate the situation of individuals in the *civitas terrena*; neither their social status (master – servant), nor their fortune (property – *habere*) (Kaute 1997, p. 48). Those living within the bounds of Polish political culture retain their relationship to the true, eternal reality; therefore, in Lelewel’s opinion,

there are no grounds upon which to add a limitation of anyone’s sovereignty to the organization of his life, even minimally. Within the *polis*, every individual is free. And free in every respect. (...) Therefore there are also no grounds upon which anyone should submit to anyone else, any ruling power, or even to the government [Kaute 1995, p. 141],

the way they submit in Europe. “Christian civilization” grants freedom, which is manifested in a community of trust built by the citizens, and best illustrated by Lelewel’s image of Polish “houses without doorbells,”¹⁹ a phenomenon occurring nowhere else in Europe. “Foreigners – Lelewel upholds – worship Polish anarchy, viewing it from a moral perspective” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 468, footnote 203], because though “there isn’t a country (...) in which a criminal would have a greater probability of avoiding punishment” [Lelewel 1855b,

18 Secondary literature acknowledges that the „most essential quality of Polish culture is its distance to all forms of civilization, including everything tied with the sphere of the *polis*. The thought and activity of every individual in every place and time should be in reference to transcendence. However, in Polish culture, this is a sphere which is not spoken about” [Kaute 1997, p. 54].

19 In Poland, as Lelewel writes, „we had humanity, equality, brotherhood, freedom, the unhampered use of estates, houses open without doorbells, safety, piety, livelihood, independence, self-recognition” [Lelewel 1855a, p. 468 footnote 203].

p. 466], Poland was a safe country, where “safety reigned in cities, travelers could ride through the wilderness and take the most deserted roads” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 466]. This state of social relations resulted from a high ethos of the community, not from fear of severe national laws, because in Poland “they don’t know the goals of harsh torture” and “the national laws prescribe benevolence and temperance”. This is the fruit of the “anarchy of freedom,” which Lelewel contrasts with “ruler-less anarchy” (*anarchia bezrządu*²⁰) and the “anarchy of social disorder.”²¹ Lelewel, drawing upon the thought of Jean Jacques Rousseau, points out that only thanks to this freedom is it possible to develop true political virtue in the citizens, which is why

the Genevan philosopher, looking at the sons of Poland (...) advised them not to renounce their rights, which had shaped them: on the bosom of that anarchy that you abhor patriotic souls developed [Lelewel 1855b, p. 467].

Meanwhile, in Europe, “look around – urges Lelewel – what is happening to personal freedom? Industry is protected: go wander through the chaotic depths of quarrels, laws, restrictions, formalities, impediments. The number of rascals is on the rise, though there are not enough of them to produce the necessary amount of paper. Facilitated communication, go with the wind: barriers, tollgates, that passport of yours, the boarder, you will be shaken out, groped, unbuttoned, *rozmama*,²² released; whichever way you turn, everywhere you will see those looking for a reason to detain and imprison you; always suspect, you always feel like a prisoner. Civilization calls, crush slavery, liberate, equality among people, but for all occasions it

20 „Anarchia bezrządu” can also be translated as „government-less anarchy” or “the anarchy of lawlessness” [L.F.].

21 „Those who rise up against Polish anarchy,” Lelewel holds, „can’t rub their eyes to discern numerous others. These are the anarchies of much-praised order, submission, and slavery; Polish [anarchy] is the anarchy of freedom.” In contrast to this, in Europe “there is no lack of anarchy anywhere, which (roll on) under the name of order. For there are dynastic anarchies, anarchies of courtly intrigues, of incessant changes of ministers, of bankruptcies, of ordinances and imperial decrees; priceless anarchies, oppressive ones, [those leading to the] debasement of nations” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 486 footnote 203].

22 It is difficult to guess what Lelewel had in mind [L.F.].

forges shackles and chains so that in a universal prison all can come to take pleasure in them”²³ [Lelewel 1885b, p. 20-21]. The “republican paradigm” attests to the superiority of the organization of political life in Poland over that of Europe. As Lelewel writes about Poles: “a high level of social bonding, political life shaped their qualities and distinguished them from other Slavs,” “a superiority of courage and fortitude over other inhabitants of Europe results from the fact that they gather, confer, and deliberate together” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 277]. The idea of *gminowładztwo* (“power of the commons”) accounts for the originality of the archetype of Polish political culture. The nations of Europe – entangled in their own historical experience: absolutism, bloody religious wars, a materialistic, burgher philosophy based on an individualism that is destructive to the community – are not able to develop true freedom. In Poland, on the other hand,

contradictory finalities do not meet (...) Deceit, perversity, bad faith are almost entirely unheard of, rare even in traitors themselves. Bloody atrocities events do not frighten if they were not acts of foreign influence. If the nation grew, it was only due to high social virtues; it does not conquer, but acquires by sweetness, *ujęciem*,²⁴ brotherhood. It has never abused an advantage or victory; rather it has not made as much use of them, as it should have [Lelewel 1855b, p. 277].

Summing up the distinctness of the conditions under which the “servitude” of citizens to fellow citizens and the ruler-ruled dichotomy were abolished in Poland and in Europe, the following must be said: in Poland, the abolishment of these was conditioned by “Christian civilization.” It is “Christian civilization” that determines the distinctness of the model of the individual-community relationship, through which needs to be understood, firstly: the interdependence of both segments of the citizen-Republic relationship (there is no room here

²³ Cf. „I spent a few years with my family in Turkey, I traveled around Asia and I felt free and at ease. I had barely stepped into Russia on my way home when I felt constrained by bonds. In whichever civilized country I find myself, I see that I am a prisoner. And whatever civilization got itself into, it cannot back out of, so it will increase” [Lelewel 1855a, p. 21].

²⁴ As in footnote 22, it is difficult to say what Lelewel had in mind [L.F.].

for the autonomy of the individual,²⁵ nor for omnipotent national government). Secondly, the identity of both segments of the ruler-ruled relationship is guaranteed not by their being subject to common laws of the state (*lex*), as is the case in Europe, but by the fact that their autonomy and status have their source in the rights of *cogito*, regardless of whether political sovereignty is wielded by a monarch or social class. The abolishment of servitude in the archetype of Polish political culture is conditioned by the archetype itself – “true Christian civilization.” For this reason, as Wojciech Kaute writes,

the Polish state is not a state submitting to rule of law (a “state of law”), if by law we understand *lex*. The state, in the archetype of Polish culture, is a state of justice [Kaute 1997, p. 48].

The central idea and foundation of *gminowładztwo* (the “power of the commons”) is the “civic spirit.” It is this “spirit,” which forms the backbone of the political and moral unity of the nation, the only binding element protecting the body of the Polish nation from being torn apart. It is identified with freedom understood as a lack of compulsion. The “civic spirit” is to be understood as such a citizen’s reference to the sphere of political life, that it constitutes for him an unlimited platform of action.²⁶ There is no room for a “leader figure,”²⁷ and

25 In Mickiewicz’s opinion, the breaking off of ties with the national community *de facto* destroys an individual, turning him into an inexplicable abstract. There is no consent here not only for autonomy, but even for the separation of the individual from the community. As Andrzej Walicki writes, “the institution of the nation – declares the poet – is nothing more than a set of tools (*zespół pomocy*) given to man, to help him abide by the truth.” According to Mickiewicz, “a man without a nationality is an incomplete man, incapable of action. He, who breaks with his nation «breaks many ties within himself. Whole clusters of those electric wires that act as conduits of grace and truth are destroyed in this way, because the fatherland is a great and powerful mediator»” [Mickiewicz 1955, qtd. in: Walicki 1973, p. 255].

26 As Lelewel writes, „to political life they were not so much prompted by a desire for fame, or vanity, as they were by devotion to their nation and a love of freedom and independence; they were not so much moved by insolence or conceit, as they were by pride, satisfied with what they had and who they were” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 278].

27 Lelewel writes, “Polish *gminowładztwo* (“power of the commons”) stands without a leader figure, it acts by way of crowds (*tłumnie*) through a conceived

such ideas as equality and brotherhood have a completely different meaning here than they do in the West. "A thought and an idea direct the noble commons, which act on their own" [Lelewel 1855b, p. 148]; the community directs its actions in accordance with the imperative of freedom, creating a spontaneous order. As has been said, the paradigm of Poland's polity (*ustrój*) is the republic, which is expressed in the "idea of the masses."²⁸ In Lelewel's take, the uniqueness of the idea of *gminowładztwo* ("power of the commons"), the "omnipotence of the people," consists in an attempt to transcend the concepts of European political thought and unite two categories derived from non-identical conceptions of the polity (*ustrój*): democratic "equality" and liberal "freedom."²⁹ Lelewel associates the first category with such ideas as the "universal will [shared by all citizens]," the "will of the people," with the second, on the other hand – "individualism," the "anarchy of freedom," and "individual rights." This "spirit" is a dynamic element, one which organizes political life, but also one that bestows value upon each individual. It is this "spirit" that causes existing factors to lose significance, while granting significance to conscious political action on behalf of the Republic (which is unambiguously

principle" [Lelewel 1855b, p. 254]. Cf. Śliwiński 1918, p. 178; Więckowska 1980, p. 41.

- 28 Lelewel accents the republican character of Poles' political culture. "In the creation of the Polish republic, in the arrangement of the *gminowładztwo szlacheckie* ("power of the noble commons"): freedom, equality, brotherhood, independence, ultimately rule was derived from the idea of the masses; only this idea became a stimulus for the great work of the state" [Lelewel 1855b, p. 253].
- 29 „Liberal freedom” is associated with the idea of „individual rights,” or a catalogue of basic rights of the individual constituting the most essential component of the liberal canon, which is centered on the category of freedom, understood as the freedom of the individual from the sphere controlled by the state. “Democratic equality” is associated with the idea of the “public good,” or the “common good.” On the other hand, the idea of *bonum commune*, rooted in the ancient philosophy of politics and elaborated in the Middle Ages, has been marginalized in all modern reflection on the state except Catholic social thought and communitarianism. A travestiation of *bonum commune* can be found in the idea of the “common good” (which modern theories of democracy have adopted), that is concentrated around the category of “equality,” as opposed to liberal “freedom.” Cf. Sartori 1994, p. 437-444; Dahl 1995, p. 39-44.

contrasted with economic activity). Poles, judged from the perspective of a "foreign spirit," "have been persuaded that they are lazy and unappealing, with an aversion to craftsmanship and industry;" on the basis of this they have been accused of "immorality, improvidence, and fickleness" (*niestatek, nieprzezorność i płochość*) – a lack of the qualities valued in burgher culture. It is enough to look at them from the perspective of the "civic spirit," Lelewel asserts, to perceive that "they were completely preoccupied with citizenship and farming," which testifies to their "staid nature" [Lelewel 1855b, p. 278].

Lelewel contrasts the Polish understanding of "republicanism" with burgher, European republicanism, in which bourgeois virtues (such as work ethic, the cult of money, and a bureaucratic organization of the state) led to the inclusion of the economic sphere, the sphere of individual entrepreneurship, into the political sphere. European republicanism treats the economic success of an individual as a sign of his participation in increasing the general welfare of society; the individual's economic activity is thus treated in categories of the common good. At the same time – in Lelewel's opinion – this good is understood in economic categories. Lelewel perceived the advantages of commercial activity, such as the tightening of interpersonal relations and a promotion of independent action; ultimately, however, commercial activity seemed to him in contradiction to the idea of civic spirit. Trade, he wrote,

encouraging profit, exposes the character to the risk of self-interest, of departing from righteous ways; it dulls humanity, imbues it with the passion of greed, drags with it immorality and maltreatment, loosens morals (*obyczaje*), weakens the public spirit, and therefore delivers dangerous hits to the freedom of nations [Lelewel 1964, p. 259].

The inclusion of the economic sphere into the world of politics meant for him *de facto* the dehumanization of the latter – the instrumental treatment of the individual. And thus – Lelewel asserts – "thoughts and concepts" elaborated by the noble culture pushed concern over economic existence out of the catalogue of civic virtues, reserving economic activity for the non-Polish burgher class.

Lelewel was of the opinion that everything valuable in the history of the Polish nation and Polish state was a result of the influence of the spirit of *gminowładztwo* ("the power of the commons"). And vice versa:

the downfall of Poland was directly related to its infiltration by an element decidedly contradictory to its “spirit” – that is, by the monarchic element. The demise of *gminowładztwo* (“power of the commons”) during the Republic’s decline³⁰ meant for him that the nobles had turned away from those models that were hitherto acknowledged. An adoption of “foreign concepts,”³¹ such as obedience towards a clerical hierarchy, servitude towards the highest hereditary officeholder – the king, and submission to the politics of a private, magnate and aristocratic oligarchy had occurred, because the nobility had succumbed to the European “spirit” of political culture. These were aggressive forces leading towards a confrontation with the republican spirit³², which the republican spirit lost. The “civic spirit” was realized only within the bounds of the nobility, which ultimately excluded burghers and peasants from political life. Poland’s deliverance was and is an adequate (not caricatured) realization of the archetype of Polish political culture. The Republic should aim at extending the privileges and freedoms of the noble “people” over the rest of the commons, which “should have, together with the nobility, used the same civil law” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 211]. Instead of this, the nobility became politically helpless, losing faith in its own power. The influence of a foreign culture caused it to reject the old, Polish principles of freedom and religious tolerance. An internal decay of the social tissue ensued: the nobility became divided into supporters and opponents of foreign, European courts and liberal or restrictive religious policy. According to Lelewel, no reforms have any chance at success if they aim to undermine the foundations of the broadly-understood polity (*ustrój*) of the Republic – the “republican paradigm.” Though he acknowledged certain values of the Constitu-

30 Lelewel believes the decisive moment to have been the Zebrzydowski Rebellion (*Rokosz Zebrzydowski*) of 1607. It is interesting to note that Lelewel’s greatest opponent – M. Bobrzyński – indicates the same rebellion (*rokosz*) as the beginning of the downfall of the Republic.

31 Lelewel strongly asserts, „Royalism, aristocracy, and the hierarchical order are foreign elements; for the Republic – crooked (*na opak idące*), unfriendly to her principles” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 309].

32 Lelewel states, „it is a confrontation, a fight, a perpetual battle of various, contradictory elements (*żywioły*). The national principle [was] unwillingly called upon to wrestle with dangerous, foreign principles that coincidence sends and imposes” [Lelewel 1855b, p. 308].

tion and Four-year Sejm,³³ Lelewel believed its content to be contradictory to the archetype of Polish culture. Hereditary monarchy and the abolishment of the nobility's political freedom (*liberum veto* and the rejection of the confederation) delivered the Polish people into the hands of a moderate monarchy, "before which the entire republican elasticity should have withdrawn as unnecessary, and even destructive, for sensible freedom" (Lelewel 1865, qtd. in: Grabski 1983, p. 203). In its most important features, the constitutional charter was a rejection of political responsibility for the fate of the nation, the nobility's abandonment of its calling to lead the Republic in the spirit of the "omnipotence of the people," a betrayal of the old Polish and old Slavic models of the polity (*ustrój*), and thus – an eradication of the sense of Polish history,³⁴ which is defined by the "republican paradigm."

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33 Lelewel comments on this act thusly: „when the nobility with this act foretold necessary freedom for the people, and lessened the distance between the burghers and itself, it slightly cleansed itself of the sin of false civilization's progression, when it renewed civic religious tolerance, it confessed the sin of submission to perverse, foreign influences” [Lelewel 1961, p. 384].

34 For Lelewel, „The voluntary passage of this act showed to what extent the nobles mistrusted one another and forgot about their past. The declaration of the nation's omnipotence in the *sejm* (diet) was a wonderful reminder of this past; the adoption of a hereditary monarchy – a renouncement of themselves; the transfer of the *sejmik's* (local diets') competences to the *sejm* – a weakening of the commons' deliberations; and the confederation and others of this sort, though already disfigured and abused by diminishing vitality – a disarming of the nobility. The entrusting of the army to the king forged a new order” [Lelewel 1961, p. 384].

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