

VISTULA UNIVERSITY

PhD Thesis

Summary

**Adam Michnik-a politician or
a thinker-moralist? The principle of balancing in
equalities as an element of political thought.**

Rafał Mariusz Woźnowski, MA

Discipline of science: Politics and administration studies

Supervisor

Dr hab. Tadeusz Bartoś prof. AFiB

Warsaw, 2024

The thesis lies within the area of theoretical political science. On the one hand, it focuses on the problems of traditional political philosophy, touching on the issue of the creation of political communities and the elements of their creation, and on the other hand, it takes up the subject within the framework of analytical political philosophy, where a key place can be found in research on political value systems. In order to be able to move in this field, a specific point of reference was established. The reference is mainly the views of Adam Michnik, which at the same time are referred to some of the views of his master, Leszek Kołakowski. These analyses, however, do not pretend to be monographic, but are interesting examples for political thinking, which are intended to show a certain description of a meta-political nature. Therefore, it should be stated that the essence of the deliberations concerns political philosophy, with particular emphasis on strands in the field of the development of civilization.

The area of research outlined in this way is interesting both because the figure of Michnik himself is extremely intriguing and evokes radical reactions, as well as because the attempt to find the basic mechanisms in shaping social life in its complexity is extremely important and may to some extent bring a new perspective on many politically significant issues. Such an attempt is usually not made by biographical descriptions or one-dimensional analyses. That is why it is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of the foundations of thinking of individual figures in public life, and not to succumb to generalities and radical stereotypes. The text is intended to level the gap, at least to some extent, and to add a broader outline by defining some of the basic concepts of political science.

The main thesis of this text is the claim that the range of political influence is much wider than it is usually acknowledged, because it appears wherever thinking in terms of cooperation, i.e. the concept of the common good, dominates (regardless of how and who defines it, whether in a democratic or even totalitarian spirit). By no means is everything politics, because human existence, which formulates questions about the meaning of life and man's place in the world, recognizes the need for individualistic thinking, which does not find answers to its questions in terms of the common good. Even if it wants to find it in these categories, it does so because it is influenced by the pervasive principle of the need to balance social inequalities (every power refers to the story of equality, even dictatorial power, and weaves it into its political form). This principle is an effective tool to control social life. At the same time, it is possible and necessary to think beyond this principle and to see its limitations and its

highly applied character. This character means that even the world of moral values or institutional religion is enlisted to work for the maintenance of a principle that can even be called dogma. From this perspective, Michnik's reflections and attitude, which in a fundamental sense echoes Kołakowski's views, fall within the scope of influence of the aforementioned dogma.

In order to be able to prove the above thesis, several research hypotheses have been put forward. Here they are. To a large extent, Michnik wove Kołakowski's views into his beliefs. Reading his master's thoughts, Michnik uses a specific optics, which is the designation of the figures of the priest and the clown. These figures, which can be regarded as a kind of code, are marked in a practical way in many places, for example during an attempt to start a dialogue between the non-religious left and the Catholic Church in Poland. A critical look at the elements of his specific political actions contributes a lot to the perception of Michnik. The Editor-in-Chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, as a political leader, reacts quite typically to changing political circumstances. The existence of elites is necessary in social life, and it is they, who knowing how to apply general terms, are able to present ever new political forms that make it possible to create shades of the principle proclaiming the need to balance inequalities. The range of means used by the elite to protect and develop this dogma is very wide. The essence of this principle is a kind of mystification which consists in constantly "getting closer" to the equalization of the life situation of the elites with the situation of the rest of societies. At the same time, this procedure is maximally useful politically. From the point of view of the defenders of dogma (who play the roles of priests and clowns), the whistle-blowers of this mystification, such as Friedrich Nietzsche or Soren Kierkegaard, may be relevant only to individual thinking, while to the thinking of the common good they are only elements that the principle can skilfully assimilate. The defenders of this rule are not interested in whether the whistle-blowers are genuine or not.

All the strands brought up in my dissertation are the result of critical analysis of texts which could have been applied thanks to gathering based on induction and analogy. In this way, it will be possible to make the necessary comparisons, and thus generalizations and specific syntheses. It should be noted that several interfluent research methods were used. On the one hand, it is a comparative method to determine similar (or identical) as well as distinguishing qualities, especially in terms of the views and attitudes of Adam Michnik and Leszek Kołakowski. On the other hand, there is the

decisional method, since the strand of political implementation in relation to such concepts as the decision centre or the decision process itself is also important for the whole disquisition. Moreover, we must not forget about certain elements of the behavioural method, because the influence of the psyche on the behaviour of the individual, whose role translates into the analysed social phenomena, may turn out to be extremely important. At the same time, it should be added that the whole thing is closed by a heuristic method, which role is to specify the terms used and help to look at the raised issues from a different perspective. Therefore, it can be concluded that the applied research approach is interpretative, as it studied ways of thinking about political phenomena, and normative, because political ideas and laws were analysed. This approach is complemented with a historical background (genesis of processes) and institutional background showing the mechanisms of effective actions.

The first chapter of the dissertation is entitled: "The attitude and views of Adam Michnik in relation to the elements of Leszek Kołakowski's concept". First of all, it deals with the issue of the influence of Kołakowski's thought on Michnik's views. Although the Editor-in-Chief of "GW" was certainly influenced by many people, such as Jacek Kuroń, it seems that Kołakowski had a dominant influence on his intellectual development and the shaping of the image of the world. Therefore, it is possible to read Michnik's statements fully only if we see them against the background of Michnik's attitude towards Kołakowski's views. In order to discover this relationship, various levels of research have been proposed. The first level concerns Michnik's statements which he directly formulated about himself. The second one includes formulations in which Michnik refers openly to Kołakowski's attitude and views. However, the most interesting level of analysis concerns those statements in which Michnik uses the optics proposed by Kołakowski, but does not point to specific borrowings. The last level involves an idea that is a consequence of the political and social circumstances that have arisen, and contains the desire to propose a positive programme of change. This idea is an attempt to create conditions for the meeting of the priest and the clown, and thus, in accordance with Kołakowski's assumptions, the most general forms of intellectual culture, which at the same time means going beyond the theory of Kołakowski, since the latter rejected such a possibility of a meeting. For Michnik, however, an opportunity for such a meeting arose, and such a meeting was the "Solidarity" movement of 1980.

When we talk about the conceptualizations in which Michnik defines himself, a few of them are the most important. Certainly, such a term is the desire to ask difficult questions and self-reliance, often seen as rebelliousness and the inability to stay permanently in a specific social environment. In addition, Michnik sees himself as an intellectual who sticks to the accepted principles against all circumstances and a sceptic who can also criticize his own views. He defines his participation in politics claiming that he did not want to make a political career, but the historical constellation made him play a political role, but his participation in politics had a moral root, since he always remained first and foremost a reader of the Gospel.

A symbolic sentence that defines Michnik's open attitude to Kołakowski's views may be the one in which he states: "I owe to Leszek Kołakowski the little that I have shown myself capable of in my life"¹. Michnik admired Kołakowski's intellectual precision, steadfastness and positive influence on listeners and readers, which he himself would strive so much for. He would repeat after Kołakowski that in his convictions he cannot limit himself to one political trend, because in different proposals there are right elements. He perceives Kołakowski as an advocate of non-denominational Christianity, in which the most important thing is the moral attitude. Nevertheless, the role of the institutional Catholic Church (especially in Poland) remains unquestionable, as it is the primary place in the fight against nihilism.

When we try to find the elements of Michnik's thought that are present in Kołakowski's work, and the Editor-in-Chief of "GW" himself does not indicate their source, the aforementioned antagonism between the priest and the clown comes to the fore. The fundamental dispute between the approach that consolidates absolute principles and the approach that questions these principles is the leitmotif of Michnik's main political constructions. This motive, which permeates Michnik's book "The Church, the Left, Dialogue"², comes down to the fact that in the situation of the threat of communism, the forces of the non-religious left and the Catholic Church should unite in resistance. This issue is dealt with in detail in the second chapter of this dissertation. On the other hand, the postulate taken from Kołakowski concerning the praise of inconsistency, i.e. the lack of final answers, which at the same time means a very positive message about openness to dialogue, corresponds with it very closely.

¹ A. Michnik, *Książę i żebrak*, w: *Polskie pytania*, Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej, Warszawa 2009, s. 217.

² A. Michnik, *Kościół lewica dialog*, Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej, Warszawa 2009.

Speaking of the relations between the views of Kołakowski and Michnik, we cannot omit a kind of blindness to the idea of Marxism. This blindness is important primarily because it is common to both figures and brings a similarly felt disappointment. Marxism has a certain systemic weakness consisting in its inability to assimilate elements of criticism, which makes it doubly disastrous for both Kołakowski and Michnik. Marxism has proved to be a kind of trap for people who manifest a kind of, so to speak, religious nature. At the same time, it should be noted that Kołakowski keeps mentioning the shades of this nature. In other words, everyone was within the range of this trap, and some people fell into it. Certainly, getting out of this trap must have been painful.

An important element of this chapter is the strand concerning Michnik's attitude towards the Church in Poland. According to Michnik, who is clearly referring to Kołakowski at this point, any attempts to eradicate religion (Catholicism in Poland) will lead to nihilism. Therefore, the Church must remain an absolutely non-removable component of the Polish identity. It should be noted that Michnik looks at the Church as an applied element, it is not about the dilemmas of the faithful, but about a socially useful institution. Of course, Michnik adds that he means an open Church, preaching the good news and devoid of political ambitions, but he realizes (explicitly after 1989) that the Polish Church is not like that.

The second chapter of the dissertation is entitled: "The Church, the Left, Dialogue and the figures of the priest and the clown". This part of the thesis is primarily concerned with the issue of reading Michnik's book from the 1970s by applying the specific perspective used by Kołakowski in his essay "The Priest and the Clown"³. It should be noted that Michnik himself does not use the terms from Kołakowski's essay, but in fact the concepts of continuity and contestation left no room for doubt. Of course, in practical terms, it is about the Catholic Church and the non-religious left, and more precisely about their meeting in the face of totalitarianism in Poland.

Michnik, while claiming that he personally considers himself a man of the left, at the same time emphasizes that he felt guilty while writing this book. It consisted in the fact that he was blind and biased in relation to the Catholic Church. He notes that both sides need a new opening, a new dialogue. What is needed is a certain community of thought, a certain alliance beyond divisions. It is not an easy dialogue, because the

³ L. Kołakowski, *Kapłan i błazen*, w: *Nasza wesola apokalipsa*, Znak, Kraków 2010.

current of continuity is attached to tradition and values the accepted canons, while the current of contestation is based on vigilant questioning and pursues mental passivity. The nature of these positions makes the conflict between them clear, but more importantly, both are absolutely necessary for our culture, especially in the face of totalitarianism. Dialogue, therefore, requires a certain heroism, which consists in the fact that man is able to give up some of his views in the name of a given value. In this case, such a higher value is building a bridge between attitudes. It seems that while Michnik intends to move in the direction of heroism defined in this way, Kołakowski emphasizes its impossibility.

According to Michnik, the conflict between the two currents was based on the fact that the left accused the Church of hostility to social reforms, intolerance, and a desire to subordinate all spheres of secular life, while the Church saw a violation of the principles of God's natural law and a predictor of moral nihilism in the program of the socialist movement. In a broader context, the left feared the clerical right and the backwardness of the Church from the period of the Second Polish Republic, and the Church was afraid of the vision of rejecting all values and creating a kind of state, secular religiosity. However, it should be noted that both sides saw the need to stand up for at least basic democratic freedoms, but they did not see each other as an ally in any manifestations of the struggle for these freedoms. The crowning examples in this matter are the 'solitary' actions in the context of the letter of the Episcopate to the German bishops on the one hand and the lack of condemnation of the events of 1968 on the other. Michnik notes that both the Church and the secular left, entrenched in their prejudices, remained alone in the fight against the manifestations of totalitarianism, which of course was a very desirable phenomenon from the perspective of the totalitarian power of the time.

The situation, according to Michnik, changes fundamentally at the moment when the parliamentary group 'Znak' submits its interpellation in connection with the events of March 1968. In the context of this interpellation (it concerned the brutal action of the militia and ORMO against university students), on one side of the stage there were the leaders of the Polish United Workers' Party and Catholics from PAX and ChSS, and on the other side there were the non-religious left and Catholics from Znak. Thus, the right-left divide became secondary to the division between supporters of totalitarianism and its opponents. The political division ceased to be the same as the religious division. In other words, for the secular left, the real enemy is not the Church, but

totalitarianism, and the main problem is the conflict between the totalitarian government and the entire Polish society which was deprived of rights. Michnik will argue that the whole idea of a secular state in general is fundamentally anti-totalitarian, not anti-church. For Michnik, who wants to create reality, this means substantive actions. Let us silence conflicts, let us seek a third way, let us fight together. Let there be a meeting between a priest and a clown, let Kołakowski's words about the impossibility of such a meeting turn out to be a mistake.

The basis of this dialogue are specific human and civil rights which, according to Michnik, connect the basic direction of the social and political postulates of the Episcopate with the left-wing program of democratic changes, including the right to freedom, the right to use cultural values, the right to freedom of religion, to decent working conditions, to association, etc. What should unite both sides in a basic way is, above all, the defence of the truth, mutual respect and the rejection of prejudices. In this context, Michnik goes even further, claiming that the values of the non-religious left in general have their roots in the Christian tradition and are preached and defended by the Church. The Editor-in-Chief of "GW" seems to present the following structure. Let us suspend our faith or disbelief in the face of the possibility of a dialogue, for it can divide us. Let us defend the fundamental values that we share. Let us tell the truth with respect and act with a sense of responsibility. Remembering our differences, we must be able to talk and share basic values in dialogue.

The dialogue will certainly not be easy and both sides must prepare for it, first of all by getting to know each other. The Left must notice that the Church is a religious and moral community, not a political party, and its task is to preach the teachings of the Gospel. Michnik even claims that the Church does not only defend religious rights, but also civil rights of non-believers, at the same time he admits that the Church also defends its own interests. However, looking at the whole picture, the Church has changed for the better. In this sense, it is necessary to talk to such a Church in a completely different way than before. The Left should notice the supra-political and supra-temporal mission of the Church, because religion is a non-removable element of the social, moral and intellectual reality in Poland. Using this point of view, Michnik states the most far-reaching thesis that such a Church is a force against which it is impossible to rule in Poland. It could be said that this overgrown optimism was an expression of a desire for the impossible, that is a meeting between a priest and a clown, as well as an overly one-sided treatment of religion in general and the Church in particular. It

should be noted that the postulate of the Church getting to know the thought of the left more closely is not so audible in Michnik's statements. Moreover, Michnik does not seem to hear Bohdan Cywiński's views on the distinction between the Julian Church and the Church of Constantine, i.e. the period of rejection of the Church from the alliance with the authorities and the period of this alliance. Michnik knows Cywiński's views, but he replies that this time the Church will behave differently. It is hard to assume that the author of the book 'The Church, the Left, Dialogue' was so naive and did not notice that the search for an alliance was in fact a tactical measure. However, as long as the Church is a defender of human rights, preaching the Gospel directly, it should be free, but if it puts its position above these goals, it cannot count on special treatment. Therefore, according to Michnik, the Church should be a sign of contradiction and not a sign of coercion using the language of a crusade.

The disappointment came quite quickly. Michnik presents them in his 1992 text "Conversation with an integrist"⁴. He states explicitly that the dialogue has been broken off, and the fall of communism turned out to be crucial in this context. A Church triumphant, convinced of its own merits and expecting gratitude through submission, came to the fore. The Church wants to become an authority that decides about practically all spheres of public and individual life, and the state is to become an instrument for the implementation of religious values. In the political sense, this happened because the Church, even when persecuted, did not renounce its alliance with the authorities, but only waited for a new, favourable power. It remains an open question whether the Church as an institution values democracy at all, whether it wants to strengthen it, or whether it only tolerates its existence when it has to. Another dimension of the question is whether the Church wants to have among its members people who have certain opinions, or rather people without individual convictions who only follow the views of the Church. And yet the essence of democracy is a variety of views and the willingness to convince others of these views. It seems that a certain option of a specific choice arises here. Either we try to shape people's beliefs by forming their consciences, because we want their good for themselves, or we participate in a political struggle and force certain beliefs for other reasons of selfish overtones. Kolakowski's convictions sound very sobering at this point when he says that if the Church is not able to shape people through its teaching, as to their specific actions and thoughts, then it

⁴ A. Michnik, *Rozmowa z integrystą*, w: *Kościół lewica dialog*, Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej, Warszawa 2009.

should rather blame itself for the lack of effectiveness, and not seek the support of the authorities. Michnik notes that the Church after 1989 shows fundamentalist tendencies and these tendencies unfortunately make the dialogue impossible, because such dialogue means readiness to question one's own assumptions.

Looking at Michnik's dilemmas above, one should ask the question whether the consistent world of the priest is inclined to dialogue in the moments of making key decisions, since the world of the priest must assume infallibility. On the other hand, if we assume that the evaluation of certain ideas depends on the context in which they are proclaimed, then it is difficult to conclude that a person belonging to the current of continuity would agree with such a view. The Church, which behaves differently (before and after 1989) confirms the thesis that the Church functions more in the area of politics, in which the question of truth becomes secondary to the political consequences and the possibility of achieving the set goals.

The next chapter is entitled: "A Priest in a Clown's Mask. The pragmatic effects of Michnik's attitude in the light of Kołakowski's decisions. Political Leadership as an effect of the changing political context". In order to get closer to the final answers to the most important issues posed in this dissertation, it was necessary to present the key elements of Kołakowski's thought which touch on the indicated subjects in more detail. In addition, a critical approach to Michnik's views and attitude is presented. They were supplemented through the prism of the concept of political leadership with an emphasis on radically changing circumstances, i.e. the situation in Poland before and after the political transformation.

Among the concepts that are important in Kołakowski's work from the perspective of this dissertation, the analysis should begin with the idea of uncertainty. Kołakowski leaves fundamental questions unanswered, talking about constantly different solutions, contradictory reasons, and uncertainty that cannot be consistent even with regard to itself. Kołakowski makes this idea into a systemic tendency to uncertainty, presenting himself as an anti-dogmatist. It must be said, however, that even if inconsistency should not be consistent, it is like saying that a clown cannot be himself completely. However, we must not forget that Kołakowski claimed that there is some foundation of morality after all. Although it is not possible to indicate the basis of its truth nor can we communicate it universally, its existence is palpable. This foundation is the occurrence of elementary situations in which all digressions cease to matter.

The second concept that should be noted is the postulate of ethics without a code. Kołakowski notes that codes provide moral security, but at the same time they relieve us of responsibility, deprive us of doubts and eliminate the feeling of guilt. Thus, the codes bring a kind of numbness of consciousness. And yet we cannot remain silent about the need to make decisions. All the more so because Kołakowski keeps emphasizing his distrust of supposedly perfect guidelines. Using the language of this treatise, it must be said that the safety of the code that is the dogma of the priestly world, cannot be an explanation for the moral horizon of the free man. However, we must not forget about the phenomenon of the Solidarity movement in which people who wanted freedom and were aware of their responsibility appeared.

An extremely important issue from the perspective of this dissertation is Kołakowski's understanding of religiosity which Michnik fully assimilates. Kołakowski understands religiosity as a fundamental element of our culture which effectively protects it from fall. It is religiosity that bears universal features, because by containing specific myths it pretends to have an objective character and at the same time causes individual acts to take place. Christianity in its most superficial version, i.e. with the application of a minimum ethical question, without major existential questions, is best prepared to protect culture, and therefore it can be universal. Besides, Christianity in the above version which seems to be adhered to by the Catholic Church, has a unique ability. It can tolerate criticism of itself. This is not self-criticism, but a forced action. The Church as an institution is able to assimilate many of the slogans of its critics, neutralizing their anti-Church consequences and reducing them to banality which leads to the neutralization of the attacks. To reiterate the language proposed in this dissertation, it must be said that culture functions tolerably when there is a certain balance between the edifying message and self-criticism. It is not a question of the sheer number of priests and clowns, but of the balance of influences. Therefore, in my opinion, it should be emphasized that Kołakowski was concerned with the balance achieved through the complementarity of the consolidating and critical aspects.

While Christianity in its institutional version can cope with criticism, socialism transformed into communism did not have this ability and had to fall. This is because communism did not accept the existence of clowns at all. It can be said that all the activities of an organized community require certain orthodoxies which then necessitate the appearance of priests. Moreover, staying outside the faith begins to undermine the essence of the priesthood, and this is already becoming dangerous for the whole

culture. In other words, communism destroyed all clowns, and thus destroyed the balance and fell. Thanks to its critics, the Church broadens the field of self-criticism, takes care of the balance and continues to work effectively. What is very important, in this way Kołakowski reduces the Church to an element of usefulness from the perspective of culture as a whole. In this way, he proposes a kind of tame religion which consists in a balance between the figures of the priest and the clown. Such an approach clearly does not confirm the requirement of ethics without a code and does not respond to the metaphysical horror that Kołakowski wrote about.

A critical look at Michnik's views and attitude was based on a very comprehensive analysis contained in the book "Michnikowszczyzna"⁵ by Rafał Ziemkiewicz. From the perspective of this dissertation, the fundamental question was whether Michnik, by putting on the robes of a priest of morality, was authentic in his political actions. The analysis of the text of "Michnikowszczyzna" can be divided into four elements. Firstly, the author of the book presented a fierce criticism of Michnik's personality. Secondly, he tried to present the effects of Michnik's erroneous political strategy. Thirdly, he presented the manifestations of Michnik's feigned morality as a tactical choice. And fourthly, he took up the subject of leadership in various political circumstances. As for the personality assessment, it is extremely negative. Ziemkiewicz speaks of an ideologue of post-communism, a poisoner of minds, a prideful man, a manipulator. This extreme approach is certainly one-sided and full of prejudices, and as such is not relevant to the main subject of my arguments, but its existence must be noticed, because it says a lot about the emotions that Michnik provokes. A much more interesting issue is that of political strategy.

According to Ziemkiewicz, Michnik, for specific political reasons, gives a helping hand to the people of post-communism, and at the worst moment for this group (just after the fall of communism) in order to avoid joining these forces with the nationalist milieu. He definitely prefers the post-communists to remain essentially in the centre of the political scene. Ziemkiewicz focuses on examples of such assistance. He talks about Michnik's opposition to the nationalization of the PZPR's property, about his consent to the burning of the files of the Security Service, about slowing down the investigation of the actions of the Ministry of the Interior, about press interviews with

⁵ R. Ziemkiewicz, *Michnikowszczyzna*, Fabryka Słów, Lublin 2016.

post-communists and theses about their honour and hostile attitude towards lustration. According to Ziemkiewicz, Michnik does all this out of fear of nationalism. Here is the reason for the wrong strategy. In order to be able to carry it out, Michnik makes a certain tactical choice, he chooses moralism as a tool to achieve the basic goal. He does not defend the post-communists as a Christian or as a defender of human rights, but as a politician with a clear goal. Thus, we can speak of pro tem moralism, the purpose of which was essentially immoral because it blurred the distinction between good and evil.

In terms of leadership in various circumstances, Ziemkiewicz states that coming from the position of a prophet and eternal warrior to new Poland in which professionalism is important, is not easy and leaving the stage would make the most sense. Although seeing Michnik's personality it is difficult to imagine. At the same time, it should be noted that Michnik himself also recognizes this problem. If we take into account the basic characteristics of a political leader, it is clear that Michnik was such a leader. He knew how to inspire collective trust, he knew how to build hope, he knew how to create new goals, he knew how to integrate the society, and he was prepared to fight. Nevertheless, the situation in Poland was dynamic. After the fall of communism, basic types of politicians emerged. A moralist politician, a visionary historian, a professional and a politician by accident. Michnik wants to combine the approach of a visionary historian and a professional, and on top of that, he does not want to give up any of the options. This connection seems to be unsustainable in the long term.

Referring to the criticism presented by Ziemkiewicz, it is necessary to make a few remarks. Ziemkiewicz's analysis of the facts is significant and cannot be overlooked, but it does not fundamentally reflect Michnik's entire approach, as it does not take into account the previously described defence of culture against fall taken from Kołakowski. From the perspective of this defence, the post-communists should be assimilated and to do so, ethical foundations should be used. In this sense, talking about the truth is only a means of social utility, and tame religiosity is a helpful tool. It should be noted here that the constant transition from the position of a priest to the position of a clown and vice versa requires great ability as well as stamina. Nevertheless, taking care of the middle of the political scene is so important that Michnik is able to balance reforms in order to avoid extremes. As long as the clown only puts on the mask and the priest puts on the robe, the balance is not threatened. It is worse when some individuals actually get into the characters. Dressing up is enough for balance, and the protection of

culture from the actual questioning of this balance is to a large extent the subject of the last chapter of this dissertation.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation is entitled: "Elites and Their Political Forms in the Struggle to Maintain the Principle of Social Balance. Whistle-blowers of lies." This is a part of the work that aspires, on the one hand, to present an attempt at a meta-political description, and on the other hand, to draw all conclusions from the analyses carried out so far. In order to be able to cope with such a task, the concept of elite has been subjected to a detailed analysis, which, as it turns out having a pejorative connotation, is in fact a great ally in maintaining the principle of balancing inequalities. In addition, a specific source of the tradition of consent to lying in politics was shown. What is more, a completely different perspective has been indicated regarding the possibility of functioning beyond the described principle of political thinking. Examples of this perspective are views that seem to be very distant from each other, namely the views of Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche.

In the analysis of the term of elite, a stratification approach was used which, unlike the institutional one, also takes into account social ties and a sense of belonging. The elite as a creature naturally necessary to lead the rest of the community in a given direction, owes its unique position of skill which consists in presenting society with a certain interpretation of the world around us. The more symbolic and abstract this interpretation is the greater the impact that can be achieved. Hence, there is only a small space to say that the creation of social myths can give real power. Some of these creators are starting their political activity. Then, there is a need to present an appropriate political form which is a certain set of views that provide the basis for ruling. This form should correspond to the level of mental maturity of the non-elite people in a given era. Most importantly, each form must contain a specific shape of the principle of balancing inequality. Creating such forms requires cleverness and a broad horizon. A thesis has been put forward that it is the idea of balancing inequality that is the most important collective fiction from the perspective of the functioning of both elites and political thinking in general. In this sense, both Kołakowski and Michnik are believers in this fiction. Of course, in their case we can emphasize – as Czesław Żnamirowski says - the chivalrous approach in elitism (which also takes responsibility for the fate of the masses), and not parasitic, but this does not change the fact that they still remain within the sphere of influence of the indicated fiction. The whole argument must also be confronted with the observation that man has a tendency to obscure reality

with the thought of it. In a way, one wants to get away from reality. A man does not want to return to natural differences between species, because these may threaten the stability of civilization. In this sense, the elites are the guardians of all communal change. That is why they are the ones who defend the need to balance inequalities in the first place. The whole masses are supposed to feel that the authorities are doing everything they can to bring about absolute equality. What methods do the elites use to defend this principle?

By defining the elites and their places in societies in this way, we can quite easily pick out those behaviours of theirs that make up the defence of the basic principle. We can divide them into two groups. On the one hand, the elites want to discredit all of the ideas that are too innovative (from their point of view), but on the other hand, they want to use a kind of calming measures, all kinds of conventions with different faces. Discrediting is really about taking away authenticity, and therefore undermining, exaggerating flaws, all this so that only those who will not threaten the basic principle come to power. In this sense, even the special moment of awakening the ideas of freedom and equality at the same time (which Alexis de Tocqueville considers to be the basis of the revolution) can in a relatively short time function again in favour of the principle of the need of balancing inequalities. Among the calming measures, the ability of the elites to self-limit, i.e. all actions of the elites that are to be perceived by the others as at least a partial departure from their own interests, should certainly be mentioned. Here, we should notice the aforementioned chivalry, too, i.e. taking responsibility for the fate of others. Such a measure is also the emergence of intermediate classes (e.g. the existence of local governments, the role of the media) and the phenomenon of the circulation of elites in general. Of course, we must not forget about making further promises, which the elites laboriously implement, each time emphasizing what a huge proof of noticing the needs of the common man it is. Here we see the primacy of pragmatism over any political doctrine. Michnik himself uses moralism in this sense as an element of the basic principle, adding timeless origin to it. Using this perspective, the Church as an institution is in fact the most effective tool for proclaiming this kind of moralism. It is in such a Church that everyone can experience a special kind of equality. Although, as we know, the role of the priest in such a Church fundamentally distinguishes "exceptional" people from the rest.

Speaking of the tradition of consent to lying in community life, we cannot fail to notice the role of Plato's views which should be understood as a certain possibility of

thinking at that time, but also today, rather than Plato himself who showed this palette. Plato pointed out that communality may require a lie, but it should be a conscious lie. The elite can cheat for the interest of the whole community, but it must do so effectively. For Plato this is absolutely understandable, permissible and even desirable. This is because, according to Plato, people are not equal, and in need of guidance, they cannot know about all the elements of the game being played. It seems that there are basically two ways to approach these claims. Either in the spirit of N. Machiavelli and being considered a cynic, hypocrite, etc., or in the spirit of Michnik and Kołakowski, arranging the message in such a way that the majority of the audience has the impression that we practice higher morality, we want everyone to be happy and we want to be seen as opponents of the cruel Machiavelli. It should be emphasized, however, that in this way we contribute to the fact that the idea of equality, instead of being created by truth, is created by deceit. However, from the point of view of the whole dissertation, those who speak openly about the actual state of affairs are genuine priests and clowns. Ultimately, the following distinction must be made. Politician differs from the thinker in that the former, being communal-minded, wants to take care of the specifically understood good of the whole, but in this way obscures reality, while the individualistically oriented thinker who first and foremost sees the specifically understood good of the individual, seeks this reality. From this point of view, Michnik is a politician, but Kołakowski is also within its reach.

To emphasize the difference indicated above, two examples of views and attitudes illustrating this difference are presented. These are the kinds of alternative thinking that wants to reach the individual meaning of existence, and although they seem to bring different answers, their paths cross at many points. Certainly, what they have in common is that they do not wear the disfigured masks of a priest or a clown, but are authentic in their search.

Soren Kierkegaard's main thought comes down to the statement that human being eludes human thought. It cannot be put into any system. To make matters worse, man's position is dramatic, functioning in a finite world while aspiring to infinity. The apogee of the absurdity of being a human in the world occurred when, according to Christianity, God appeared in time. Man can respond to this absurdity fully in only one way – one must believe. Such faith transcends reason and requires individual commitment. No one will do anything for anyone here. At the same time, according to Kierkegaard, it should be noted that no objective certainty exists, it is the subjective certainty of

faith that is made possible by objective uncertainty. Thus, all disseminating, rationalizing institutions are harmful because they distract from actual faith. One should even suspend ethics, because the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith. Good is not God, one must look for something beyond good, look for God. In this sense, Kierkegaard proclaimed the end of historically understood Christianity. Kolakowski could not agree to accept such a point of view (even speaking of ethics without a code), and even less could Michnik with his story of communal good. Kierkegaard rejects any attempt to tame religiosity, for such taming results in the fact that there are no Christians in the Christian world. The consequence of faith is the ability to love. To love is to see in our neighbours that they are capable of loving. This is the only level on which we are equal - we can see that others have the ability to love. Whether they use it is a completely different matter. One can summarize that Kierkegaard contrasted the truth of existence with the deception of politics. He advocated unmasking convention and making an individual choice. In such an arrangement, the distinction between priest and clown in the world of faith does not function at all.

Nietzsche made a similar attack on the commonly accepted appearance and convention. He emphasized the total changeability of reality and the absurd attempt of the human mind to order this reality without distorting its essence. Such an attempt is culture in its broadest sense (so protected by Kolakowski and Michnik) which gives a sense of illusory safety, but at the same time it takes away the will to live. Such a seemingly orderly world is dominated by weak-willed people who impose values that ensure stability and slow development. This weak will most often uses the instrument of the promise of true life only after death. At the same time, we reject the truth that life itself is the goal, and in order to see it we need to reevaluate all the values that currently prevail. One must stand beyond good and evil. If this is achieved, it will be possible to breed a superman who will be able to love necessity and accept eternal return.

What both concepts have in common is the ability to look at culture and civilization from a completely new perspective. Each of us should find our own way which in fact sounds like a denial of community, a denial of politics. But according to both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, it should be noted that such a choice is possible. You can feel the will to power, you can believe in the absurd. Of course, such attitudes are considered insane, even lunatic, in the world of culture. They can be ridiculed, condemned, but it is best to eliminate their influence. This ability is so much sought by

the principle of balancing inequality, to neutralize influences. It should be emphasized, however, that it is these misfits who are authentic, they do not wear masks or dignified robes. They do not agree to conventions, they do not want fiction to be created. At the same time, we can see that the superman and the knight of faith, as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard call them, are elites. Such an elite, however, says something stunning in contrast to the political elite – everyone has a choice and priests are not needed. Within the framework of the principle of balancing inequalities, it is culture that makes the appropriate choice of rationality for us.

Ultimately, both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche point to the chosen by them Absolute. For the Dane, it is the absurd God, for Nietzsche the horizon of the superman. They are authentic in their choices. It is difficult to look for authenticity for a broadly understood culture whose existence is determined by community. It seems that it was precisely this scale of authenticity that Kołakowski and Michnik did not take into account at all. In this way, we can claim that the main conclusion of this work is the postulate of making a conscious choice.

It seems that the results of the research contained in this dissertation will be able to designate at least a few fields for further analysis. To what extent is the principle of the need of balancing inequalities visible and important to other well-known figures of public life? In this context, it is very interesting (especially in the era of technological progress) to ask about political marketing with its behavioural elements and the practice of politics dictated by the results of polls. In this sense, questions and research on the relationship between politics and ethics are indispensable. To what extent does the axiological awareness of the authorities in the polls not pose another threat to culture in the broadest sense (next to the nihilism and fanaticism mentioned by Kołakowski and Michnik).