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<https://doi.org/10.35765/slowniki.635en>

Between Florian Znaniecki's humanistic coefficient and the explanation of human action in the Poznań methodological school

Summary

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: The aim of this article is to compare Znaniecki's conception of the explanation of human action with analogous approaches developed within the Poznań methodological school. The analytical framework for this discussion is provided by debates within the humanities at the turn of the twentieth century, which may be represented through the opposing conceptual pairs of naturalism versus anti-naturalism and nomotheticism versus idiographism.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM: The point of departure is a presentation of Max Weber's classification of human action, which emerged from the aforementioned debates, together with an analysis of Florian Znaniecki's concept of the humanistic coefficient and his understanding of the status of the humanities.

DISCUSSION OF THE TERM: Within the Poznań methodological school, three conceptions addressing human activity were developed: Jerzy Kmita's model of humanistic interpretation, Jerzy Topolski's model of integral explanation, and Leszek Nowak's generalised model of the rational individual. The idealisational status of these conceptions raises the question of their empirical adequacy in explaining human action.

SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Although the principle of rationality is widely employed as an explanatory premise in the social sciences, the rational model of

the individual does not appear to possess universal applicability. For example, restrictions on freedom in totalitarian systems deprive individuals of the possibility of choice and compel them to accept an imposed system of values. A promising avenue for further research would involve the analysis of social systems in which constraints on individual choice operate in less visible, yet no less effective, ways, such as through the shaping of linguistic and consumer habits, or through restrictions on economic freedom.

Keywords: humanistic coefficient, rationality, model, idealisation, enslavement

Definition of the term

The distinctiveness of the humanities in relation to the natural sciences is particularly evident in the ways in which the actions of individuals and entire communities are explained. Traditionally, this distinction has been conceptualised through two pairs of opposing concepts: nomotheticism versus idiographism, and naturalism versus anti-naturalism.

The first distinction was introduced by Wilhelm Windelband, who differentiated between nomothetic and idiographic sciences. Nomothetic sciences, which for him included the natural sciences, seek to discover and formulate scientific laws. For the natural scientist:

an individual existing object of observation never has scientific value; it is of interest only insofar as it can serve as a particular case of a generic concept [...] [the scientist] sees in it only those characteristics that make it possible to gain insight into general regularities (Windelband, 1921/1992, p. 172).

The use of such 'general regularities' in the natural sciences was reconstructed by Hempel in his deductive-nomological model of explanation. This model consists of statements describing the facts to be explained (*explanandum*) and explanatory statements (*explanans*). The latter component of explanation comprises statements specifying initial conditions together with general laws from which the statements to be explained are derived. According to Hempel, the distinctive feature of explaining human action lies in invoking the principle of rationality, which functions analogously to a scientific law (for a discussion of the debates surrounding the deductive-nomological model, see Brzechczyn, 2022).

By contrast, the aim of idiographic sciences is to emphasise what is particular and unique. The task of the researcher is to "revive a creation of the past in its full individuality" (Windelband, 1921/1992, p. 172). Consequently, the historian

should approach what actually occurred in much the same way as an artist approaches what exists in the imagination. Here lie the roots of the affinity between historical and artistic creation, and between historical disciplines and *belles lettres* (Windelband, 1921/1992, p. 172).

Windelband nevertheless observed that the same phenomena can be investigated either nomothetically or idiographically. It is worth

emphasising that idiographism (as well as nomotheticism) may be understood in objective, science-of-science, and normative terms (Malewski & Topolski, 1960, pp. 21–22). The objective dimension assumes that the very nature of the reality inhabited by humans requires an idiographic mode of investigation. The science-theoretical approach concerns the division of scientific labour, according to which the task of historians (and humanists more generally) is to investigate reality in an idiographic manner. Normative idiographism, in turn, formulates heuristic and methodological directives that make this task possible.

The second pair of oppositions – naturalism versus anti-naturalism – can be understood in both ontological and methodological terms. The ontological distinction concerns the question of whether there exists a single kind of being or two distinct domains: the world of nature and the world of culture. Ontological naturalism advocates the unity of the world, whereas anti-naturalism distinguishes between two types of beings. The first comprises inanimate nature and the non-human animal world lacking self-consciousness. The second consists of the human world, characterised by self-consciousness and the capacity to create culture. The methodological version of the naturalism–anti-naturalism distinction concerns the question of the unity of scientific method. Methodological naturalism assumes methodological universalism, whereas methodological anti-naturalism, owing to the ontological distinctiveness of the human world, maintains that the humanities require separate cognitive methods, such as introspection, interpretation, and various hermeneutic approaches. It is also worth noting the intermediate position of moderate naturalism, which allows for the use in the humanities of methodologies derived from the achievements of the natural sciences, while not excluding the application of cognitive methods specific to the humanities, which are grounded in understanding and various forms of interpretation (Wierchosławski, 2019, pp. 66–71).

Historical analysis of the term

As a result of the anti-positivist turn that took place at the turn of the 20th century, an anti-naturalist philosophy of the humanities emerged in Germany, developed by thinkers such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Heinrich

Rickert, and Max Weber. Weber argued that a distinctive research method employed in the humanities is the construction of ideal types, which broadly consists in accentuating the essential features of the phenomena under investigation. Weber employed this method particularly in his analysis of rationality; he distinguished between action and behaviour. Behaviour is a physiological reaction of an organism (for example, blinking when something enters the eye) that lacks an intentionally assigned purpose. Action, by contrast, is an activity directed toward goals consciously selected by the subject. Weber (1921/1968, pp. 24–26) distinguished the following types of action, differing in their degree of rationality:

- **Affectual action** – an activity undertaken under the influence of emotions and feelings, such as anger or rage, in which there is no deliberate selection of goals or of the means necessary to achieve them.
- **Traditional action** – an activity undertaken on the basis of established habits and customs that possess an interpersonal character (for example, ritual and sacred practices) and are repeatedly performed in the same way. When traditional action becomes an object of reflection, it may be transformed into value-rational action.
- **Value-rational action** – the realisation of cultural values such as patriotism, dignity, honour, or beauty. These values possess a supra-individual character, although individuals retain freedom in selecting the means through which such values are pursued.
- **Instrumentally rational action** – the individual selects not only the means that, according to their knowledge, are likely to achieve intended goals, but may also revise or alter those goals if they prove impossible to realise (for example, because they require excessive effort or resources).

Like Weber, Znaniecki distinguished behaviour from activities (*czynności*), which are actions consciously undertaken by individuals. This sociologist from Poznań observed that both the course of human actions and their products are created with the intention of being interpreted by others. The understanding of cultural artifacts therefore presupposes their prior constitution within someone's consciousness:

humanistic phenomena (...) are essentially phenomena that are 'someone's'. They are objects of experience and activity, as well as the intellectual or practical activities of members of our own social group, as experienced and understood by ourselves and by other members of that group; further, they include objects and activities that we presently observe in other social groups (Znaniiecki, 1922/1988, p. 24).

Znaniiecki referred to this orientation of the products of human activity toward interpretation by others as the humanistic coefficient:

Myth, a work of art, a linguistic expression, a tool, a legal pattern, a social order, are what they are only as conscious human phenomena [...]. Without the humanistic coefficient, there is no myth at all; a painting is merely a chaos of coloured patches on canvas (Znaniiecki, 1922/1988, p. 25).

This makes it possible to formulate the following heuristic directive: in the humanities, the primary research method is not the reconstruction of causal relationships but rather understanding, which consists in reconstructing the purposes of human actions and assigning meaning to the artifacts they produce.

Although a humanistic component is also present in the natural sciences, it does not play the same role there as it does in the humanities. In natural scientific research, it may legitimately be disregarded. The meaning attributed to a solar eclipse in ancient Egypt (for example, as punishment by the gods for disobedience toward authority) in no way affected the positions of the Earth, Moon, and Sun that caused the eclipse. Therefore, as Znaniiecki observed, in the case of natural phenomena this component may, at least as a first approximation, be regarded as negligible.

The originality of Znaniiecki's approach also lies in his anti-naturalist theory of culture. In his understanding, culture encompasses all products of human activity as well as activities that individuals learn from others. Human products may be divided into material and immaterial forms. Material products are located in physical space and are accessible through sensory experience. Consequently, they can be used by only a limited number of individuals and deteriorate with use. Immaterial products, by contrast, are not spatially located and are accessible through intellectual activity. They may therefore be available to an unlimited number of individuals, and their widespread use does not lead to their destruction. Examples of such artifacts include mythical beings and

events, literary fictions, scientific and philosophical theories, systems of values and norms of conduct – moral, political, technological, aesthetic, and logical – as well as ideals, stereotypes, representations of oneself and others, language, literature, and musical works.

Discussion of the term

Research programme of the Poznań methodological school

Znaniecki returned repeatedly to the concept of the humanistic coefficient during the interwar period. After World War II, however, he settled in the United States, and in postwar Poland his works and ideas largely disappeared from academic circulation for political reasons. Between 1945 and 1956, the dominance of the Stalinist version of Marxism effectively curtailed discussion concerning the explanation of human action and the distinctive character of the humanities. Such debates re-emerged in a new form after 1956. One of the intellectual environments in which these issues were examined with particular intensity was the Poznań methodological school, established in the late 1960s.

In *Studia nad teoretycznymi podstawami humanistyki*, the programmatic work of Leszek Nowak and Jerzy Kmita, the authors stated that the purpose of the book was

an attempt to oppose anti-naturalist conceptions of the humanities with a naturalist position that, while preserving the valid intuitions of anti-naturalist approaches, would nevertheless be free from certain of their shortcomings (Nowak & Kmita, 1968, p. 4).

According to the authors, anti-naturalist theories of action are concerned primarily with the course of actions and their effects on social conditions, while neglecting the issue of how actions themselves are shaped by socio-economic conditions. By contrast, analyses conducted within Marxist methodology focus predominantly on the determination of actions by socio-economic conditions and devote relatively little attention to the course of action itself or its influence on the surrounding socio-economic environment.

Kmita and Nowak described their position as anti-positivist naturalism, the distinctive feature of which was the assumption of idealisation, absent from both positivism and Popperian hypothetism. According to these authors, naturalism understood in this sense is a position according to which research in the humanities should adhere to the same methodological principles as research in the natural sciences:

- the principle of the intersubjective communicability of formulated statements,
- the principle of their intersubjective testability,
- the principle of the empirical applicability of descriptive concepts (i.e., concepts that are neither logical nor mathematical).

The research programme of the Poznań methodological school may be characterised by the following principles:

1. **Naturalism** – the assumption that the humanities and social sciences should adhere to the same methodological principles as the natural sciences, albeit with certain domain-specific modifications.
2. **Hypothetism** – the assumption that the formulation of problems, hypotheses, and research questions is central to inquiry in both the natural sciences and the humanities, since these guide the course of empirical research.
3. **Essentialism** – the assumption that reality itself is objectively differentiated into primary and secondary aspects.
4. **Idealisation** – the assumption that the fundamental method of constructing scientific theories is the modelling of reality through the elimination of secondary factors and a concentration on the principal ones.
5. **Rationalism** – the assumption that human actions and their products are explained and interpreted on the basis of rationality, which is assigned the status of an idealisational assumption.

The model of humanistic interpretation

It is worth noting that the literature distinguishes between two understandings of rationality: substantive and formal (Kleszcz, 2007, pp. 109–142). In the substantive understanding, certain conditions are

imposed on the goals pursued by individuals: both the choice of goals and the manner of their realisation should take into account the preferences of others or, at the very least, should not conflict with those preferences or with generally accepted cultural values. In the formal understanding, being a rational person is reduced to selecting actions in such a way as to achieve one's intended preferences. No axiological constraints are imposed on individuals' preferences, on their knowledge concerning which actions should be undertaken to realise these preferences, nor on the ultimate outcomes of their actions (for a review of various conceptions of rationality, see Ciesielski, 2012, pp. 14–48).

In the Poznań methodological school, formal rationality was the primary focus of analysis. In his model of humanistic interpretation, Kmita (1971, pp. 28–29) reconstructed the assumption of rationality (Z_1) in the following way: if an individual X is to choose one among a set of actions ($C_1, \dots, C_n$), which, according to their knowledge at a given time t , are jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive (that is, selecting one action excludes the realisation of the others), and if each of these actions leads to different outcomes $Sa, \dots, Sm$, ordered according to that individual's hierarchy of preferences, then X will undertake the action that leads to the outcome most preferred by them. From this assumption of rationality (Z_1), together with the following two premises:

Z_2 : S_j is the most highly preferred outcome for X at time t ;

Z_3 : according to X 's knowledge, action C_i reliably leads to outcome S_j ;
the following *explanandum* is derived: X will undertake action C_i at time t .

In this model, the assumption of rationality functions as a scientific law. Among rational actions, Kmita distinguished those whose intended goals are realised regardless of whether anyone understands the meaning of the action itself. Examples include hammering a nail into a wall in order to hang a picture or sowing seeds as part of agricultural work. Kmita classified such actions as belonging to the sphere of technical-utilitarian culture.

The purpose of actions such as saying 'good morning' while simultaneously tipping one's hat, or placing a metal band (a crown) on someone's head, is realised only when another person correctly interprets their meaning. Such actions belong to the sphere of symbolic culture and involve concepts such as cultural groups, rules of cultural interpretation, and cultural competences.

A cultural group consists of a set of individuals who know a particular system of rules of cultural interpretation and assume that other members of the group know them as well. Kmita observed that rules of cultural interpretation are not fully codified; consequently, members of a cultural group need not be fully aware of their significance. A key role in the acquisition of cultural competences is played by socialisation and upbringing, through which the initially unreflective imitation of certain activities is transformed into their conscious performance. This corresponds to Weber's concept of the rationalisation of traditional action.

Kmita's theory therefore leads to several important heuristic directives. A prerequisite for conscious participation not only in a cultural group but also for the study of various human communities (both past and present) is the acquisition of specific cultural competences that enable the goals and meanings of actions undertaken by individuals to be understood. In this respect, a similarity to Znaniecki's concept of the humanistic coefficient can be identified. The principal difference appears to be that whereas Znaniecki applied the humanistic coefficient to all human actions, Kmita restricted its application to actions undertaken within the sphere of symbolic culture.

The model of integral explanation

A further development of the model of humanistic interpretation was Jerzy Topolski's (1983, pp. 419–431) model of integral explanation. He proposed an expansion of both the model of humanistic interpretation and the deductive-nomological model of explanation, "in order to find the threads connecting the two models" (1983, p. 419). The 'factors' or 'conditions' identified in the deductive-nomological model never influence human actions directly; rather, their effects are mediated through human consciousness, which consists of human knowledge (whether adequate or distorted) and systems of values that define the hierarchies of preferences guiding individuals' actions. In Topolski's proposed model of explanation, one should seek both to reconstruct the motivational structures of individuals acting in the past and to identify the influence of supra-individual social structures and natural conditions formulated in the form of laws.

The link connecting individual consciousness with social conditions is constituted by various forms of collective consciousness, such as political ideologies (e.g., liberalism, socialism, or conservatism), artistic styles, and ethical currents. On the one hand, these forms of consciousness may be functional with respect to social conditions (according to Marxism), though they need not necessarily be so (according to culturalism). On the other hand, they constitute the inherited intellectual tradition from which individual consciousness is formed. In formulating goals and recognising the conditions of action, individuals take into account the previously established worldview and value system of the social group to which they belong.

People often act on the basis of distorted, mythologised, or false knowledge, which may lead them to misrecognise social and natural conditions and thereby affect the effectiveness of their actions. As a consequence, discrepancies may emerge between the goals individuals formulate and the actual outcomes of their actions.

An example of this mode of explanation was presented in Topolski's work on the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe. According to Topolski (1987), the 14th century witnessed a decline in the income of the nobility caused by multiple factors, including plague epidemics, inflation, the growth of the noble estate, and the increasing strength of the bourgeoisie. As a result, a growing discrepancy emerged between the nobility's culturally defined lifestyle and the resources available for maintaining that prescribed way of life.

The decline in noble incomes, which generated a gap between culturally defined needs and the means available for satisfying them, compelled the nobility to undertake countermeasures. These responses assumed different forms across European countries: increasing the exploitation of the peasantry, appropriating part of the income generated by the bourgeoisie, altering the internal distribution of income within the feudal class, or engaging directly in economic activity.

Attempts to intensify the exploitation of the peasantry triggered a series of revolts that swept across Western Europe from the second half of the 14th century to the beginning of the 16th century, while other measures proved relatively ineffective in the long term. Over time, the only effective means of counteracting declining incomes was the nobility's engagement in economic activity, although its specific

forms depended on local conditions. In Western Europe, the strength of the bourgeoisie and the existence of an established urban economy directed noble economic activity toward a commodity-money economy, leading to the emergence of capitalism. In Central and Eastern Europe, by contrast, the introduction of the 'second serfdom' led to the refeudalisation of the economy.

For Topolski, a culturally determined lifestyle played a key role in explaining the origins of capitalism as it compelled the nobility toward greater economic activity. However, as Gwidon Zalejko and Andrzej Zybertowicz correctly observed:

The manner in which a given individual or social group responds to changes in objective conditions of existence is determined by cultural content (knowledge about the world and systems of values). Yet such culture does not necessarily entail an imperative to counteract a deteriorating economic situation. Passive acceptance of whatever fate brings may also occur. We therefore do not believe that the economic activity of the nobility constituted any kind of historical necessity (particularly in light of our knowledge of the values upheld within medieval Christian culture); it represented only one possible course of action (Zalejko & Zybertowicz, 1993, p. 78).

The dynamics of enslavement and the limits of rationality

A legitimate question may be raised as to whom such an assumption of rationality actually applies. Two types of limitations can be identified: one methodological and the other substantive. When one attempts to apply the model of the rational individual to explain the actions of real people, it becomes apparent that few of them (if any) act in a fully rational manner. In the view of the representatives of the Poznań methodological school, the assumption of rationality has the status of an idealisation assumption (Brzechczyn, 2019, pp. 207–208), while for Weber it constitutes an ideal type.

The substantive limitations deserve closer attention. In developing his theory of socialism, Nowak constructed a model of the human individual that reveals the limitations of the assumption of rationality (Nowak, 1991, pp. 3–19). Let us therefore present this model in greater detail. Let us assume that the following sequence of states of affairs reflects the preference structure of individual *X*:

A, B, ..., C, N, P, R, ..., Z

The states of affairs *A, B, ..., C* represent realisations of positive values (goods) for individual *X*. State *A* constitutes *X*'s highest value, whereas states *B, ..., C* represent progressively lower-order values. State *N* is neutral for *X*. By contrast, states *P, R, ..., Z*, which are less preferred than state *N*, represent negative values for *X*. State *Z* occupies the lowest position in *X*'s hierarchy of values. The benevolence of individual *Y* toward individual *X* consists in realising positive states of affairs (values) for *X*, whereas the hostility of *Y* toward *X* is expressed through bringing about states of affairs that *X* regards as undesirable.

Within the conceptual framework of this model, three domains of interpersonal relations may be distinguished. In the normal domain, the principle of reciprocity prevails: individuals spontaneously respond to hostility displayed by an interaction partner with hostility, and to benevolence with benevolence. Within this domain of interpersonal relations, the ethic of love of one's neighbour applies. According to Nowak, the ethical principle expressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount – "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27) – presupposes an accurate recognition of the actual state of interpersonal relations. People spontaneously act according to the principle of reciprocity: they respond to evil with evil and to good with good. Yet, as Jesus observes: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that" (Matthew 5:43–48). Transcending the principle of reciprocity in interpersonal relations is achieved through following the principle 'of turning the other cheek': "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also" (Matthew 5:38–39). Nowak explains this in the following way:

Now, if I overcome the hatred of my enemy, if I manage to feel unconditional friendliness toward the person who make me suffer, I will not – Christ says – do it in vain. If I manage to love instead of hate, if I see in my enemy not a dishonorable scoundrel without conscience, but someone who is similar to me, imperfect in the same way. I will then eliminate his hatred and he will reply with the same: unconditional friendliness. Perhaps he will not reply with that to me, but he will to someone (Nowak, 1991, p. 7).

According to Nowak, however, the 'principle of turning the other cheek' gradually loses its effectiveness under conditions of extreme evil, because the greater the harm experienced by an individual, the weaker their tendency to respond in kind becomes. In the final stage of this process – the domain of enslavement – the individual entirely abandons the pursuit of their own preferences and adopts those of the oppressor. Within this domain of interpersonal relations, the ethic of love of one's neighbour should be replaced by a revolutionary ethic of rebellion.

A literary example of enslavement is Winston Smith in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, who by the end of the novel comes to love Big Brother. A historical example can be found in the behaviour of communists during the Moscow Trials, who, while remaining loyal to the Party, confessed to crimes fabricated by the NKVD. This limitation of the rational conception of human beings leads to the following heuristic directive: to explain the behaviour of an enslaved individual, one must reconstruct the preferences of the enslaver (or of the oppressive social environment), rather than those of the enslaved individual.

At the opposite pole of interpersonal relations, when an individual experiences increasingly greater good from an interaction partner, their tendency to reciprocate in kind gradually diminishes. In the final stage of this process – the domain of satanization – an individual ceases to pursue their own preferences and instead becomes guided by counter-preferences directed against the interaction partner:

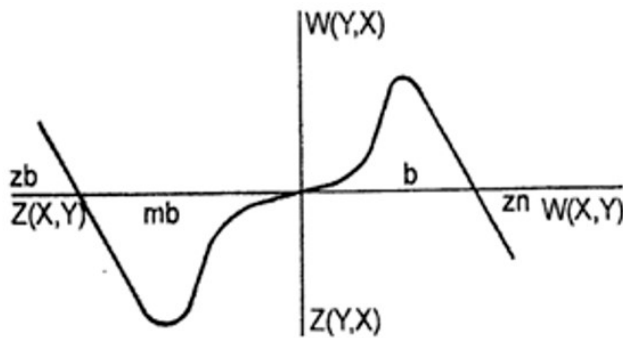
In the truly extreme case, when someone realises for us the highest good, it turns into an attitude, which, as in Russian saying 'с жиру беситься', we will call the attitude of satanization. This attitude consists in responding to the greatest benevolence with hostility, or in other words, acting according to the counter-preference of our benefactor (Nowak, 1991, p. 13).

In colloquial terms, one might say that the individual acts 'out of spite'. An example of action in a state of satanization is a hooligan destroying a park bench. Such an act brings no benefit to the perpetrator; its sole purpose is to violate prevailing social norms. An increase in actions undertaken in a state of satanization is generally symptomatic of a deepening social crisis. During periods of revolution, a rapid increase in such actions may lead, in sociological terms, to social anomie. Within

this domain of interpersonal relations, the restoration of political order is ensured by a conservative ethic of social order that legitimises severe measures by political authorities. This second limitation of the rational conception of human beings leads to another heuristic directive: to explain or interpret the conduct of an individual in a state of satanization, one must reconstruct the counter-preferences of their benefactor (or of the broader social environment).

The dynamics of interpersonal relations are illustrated graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Generalised model of the rational individual



Notation: $W(X, Y)$ – hostility of X toward Y ; $W(Y, X)$ – reciprocal hostility of Y toward X ; $Z(X, Y)$ – benevolence of X toward Y ; $Z(Y, X)$ – reciprocal benevolence of Y toward X ; b – domain of rebellion; zn – domain of enslavement; zb – domain of satanization; mb – domain of love of one's neighbour.

Source: Nowak, 1991, p. 14.

This figure depicts the behavioural trajectory of a typical individual. The model also makes it possible to distinguish a number of singular attitudes, such as those of the benefactor, the wrongdoer, the rebel, and the God-fearing individual. The attitude of a benefactor characterises an individual who, regardless of whether they experience harm or benefit from an interaction partner, always responds with benevolence. The opposite attitude is represented by the malefactor, who responds with hostility regardless of whether they receive favourable or unfavourable treatment from an interaction partner. The rebellious attitude characterises an individual who does not become enslaved and therefore responds to increasing harm with reciprocal hostility rather

than with pathological benevolence. Symmetrical to the attitude of the rebel is that of the God-fearing individual, who does not succumb to satanization.

A characteristic feature of societies belonging to the European developmental trajectory was the separation of the classes of rulers, owners, and priests, whose influences mutually balanced one another and thereby guaranteed individuals a certain degree of freedom of action. In societies of real existing socialism, however, a cumulative fusion of class divisions occurred. The ruling class within this system is the triple ruling class, which monopolised control over the means of coercion, production, and indoctrination. Its principal interest is the maximisation of power, while the maximisation of profit or spiritual domination is subordinated to the expansion of political control. Unlike class societies, political authority, lacking a natural counterbalance in the form of separate social classes, can intensify its political domination without restraint.

At a certain stage in the development of real existing socialism (commonly referred to as 'Stalinism'), the extensive expansion of political regulation becomes impossible because all spheres of social life have already been subordinated. What remains is the intensification of enslavement, which undermines the principle of rationality understood both as a basis for individual conduct grounded in free choice and as a heuristic directive suggesting the reconstruction of the goals of individual action.

Let us examine the intensification of enslavement at the microsocial level (Nowak, 1981/2011, pp. 90–102). We have an ordered set of states of affairs reflecting the hierarchy of values of individual *X*:

$$A, B, \dots, C, N, P, R, \dots, Z$$

Let us recall that states of affairs *A, B, C* constitute a sequence of positive values for individual *X*, whereas *P, R, ..., Z* represent negative values. For the sake of simplicity, let us assume that the negative values of individual *X* (the subordinate) correspond, in reverse order, to positive values for individual *Y* (the ruler); that is, state *Z* simultaneously constitutes the highest negative value for *X* and the highest positive value for *Y*.

Political domination consists in the ruler, equipped with means of coercion, preventing the subordinate from realising value *A*, which the subordinate values most highly. Two possibilities may arise:

- the value of the state of affairs *A*, prohibited by the ruler, is so important to the subordinate that, despite the risk of sanctions (for example, a fine or imprisonment), they still decide to pursue it;
- the severity of sanctions is so great that it alters the subordinate's hierarchy of values, leading them to undertake actions directed toward state *B*, which realises a value occupying a lower position in their hierarchy of preferences.

The deepening of domination proceeds through the authority successively imposing sanctions upon the second most highly valued state *B*, and then upon subsequent values, eventually reaching the point of prohibiting the realisation of value *C*. Under conditions of enslavement, the subordinate no longer acts according to the principle of rationality, understood as the autonomous selection of actions leading to the realisation of personally valued goals. Instead, they follow a principle of *rational passivity*: among the values they hold, they pursue only those that are not burdened by sanctions imposed by authority. As Nowak explains:

It is a principle of passivity because the compliant individual does not maximise his preferences – he merely satisfies them. Yet these remain his own preferences, and therefore he still resembles, in some sense, the rational subject characteristic of previous socio-economic formations. Or, put differently, the compliant individual maximises his preferences only up to a certain point, a point that still remains within the expectations of the triple ruler. Going beyond that point becomes impossible for him – the compliant individual has simply learned that there are certain things he is not permitted to desire. He has learned this through the critical situations encountered along his path (Nowak, 1981/2011, p. 96).

The second stage of enslavement consists in instilling the ruler's hierarchy of preferences in the subordinate. This process begins by compelling the subordinate, in a similar manner, to realise the lowest-valued preference within the hierarchy accepted by the ruler; in this case, value *P*. Subsequently, the realisation of the second-lowest value (*R*) within the ruler's hierarchy is imposed, and so on. The subordinate then acts according to a principle of *irrational compliance*, because their decisions are no longer made autonomously on the basis of their own hierarchy of values; rather, their conduct is dictated by the ruler.

In the third stage of enslavement – which may be termed *irrational zeal* – subordinates undertake actions that they believe realise the highest-valued goals (*Z*) within the imposed axiological order.

Systematic reflection with conclusions and recommendations

In the research recommendations, I would like to draw attention to two issues. First, it would be worthwhile to explicate, or at least compare, the presented conception of enslavement with other analogous theories found in the literature. Such a comparison could provide inspiration for the further development of both theories under consideration. For example, the concept of enslavement may correspond to what Steven Lukes referred to as the three-dimensional view of power. According to him:

A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping, or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (Lukes, 1974, p. 23).

In Lukes's account, the exercise of this form of social control does not necessarily require repression or terror; control over mass media, education, and processes of socialisation is entirely sufficient. Under such conditions, individuals unconsciously accept their role within the social system as something natural (or sacred), without alternatives, necessary, and unchangeable.

This observation could be further elaborated if one assumes that the path of enslavement proposed by Nowak (rational passivity – irrational compliance – irrational zeal) is not the only possible variant of subordination. First, the prohibition of actions that realise values respected by citizens and the enforcement of actions embodying the authority's own axiological order may occur simultaneously. Second, the ruler may begin either by preventing the realisation of a value occupying a subordinate position within the subordinate's hierarchy of values, or by prohibiting the realisation of the value occupying the highest position in that hierarchy. The same applies to the method through which the ruler's hierarchy of values is imposed. In an accelerated strategy of enslavement, the ruler, by threatening repression, may immediately prohibit the subordinate from realising their highest value (A) and compel them to realise

the value most highly regarded by the ruler (*Z*). Assuming, for the sake of simplicity, that the subordinate's hierarchy of negative values simultaneously constitutes the ruler's hierarchy of positive values, this strategy may be represented as follows (commanded and prohibited values are indicated in bold):

A, B, ..., C, N, P, R, ..., Z

In a gradual strategy of enslavement, the ruler initially blocks the realisation of a value occupying a subordinate position in the subordinate's axiological order (*C*), while simultaneously compelling the realisation of a value occupying a similarly subordinate position within the ruler's own hierarchy of values (*P*). This strategy may be represented as follows:

A, B, ..., C, N, P, R, ..., Z

Mixed strategies may also be distinguished, whereby public authority compels citizens to realise the highest value within its own axiological order while initially prohibiting the realisation of a subordinate value within the citizen's value system – or vice versa. A separate research problem concerns identifying the social and political conditions under which these two (or, more precisely, four) strategies of enslavement become functional, as well as exploring their empirical applications.

The assumption of rationality, which refers back to the concept of freedom, performs both explanatory and normative functions. Freedom – at least within European culture – constitutes a desirable value. Therefore, regardless of ontological assumptions and the methodological status of the models being constructed, the rationalist paradigm appears to provide the primary framework for explaining human action. It should be remembered, however, that this paradigm retains its explanatory power only within social and cultural systems that guarantee human freedom. This has not always been the case, even in the history of European societies, and there is no guarantee that it always will be.

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**WYDAWNICTWO NAUKOWE
UNIwersytetu Ignatianum w Krakowie**

KRAKÓW 2026

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Publikacja finansowana w ramach zadania zleconego
ze środków Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego
UMOWA Nr MEiN/2021/DPI/178



Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

Recenzenci

em. prof. dr hab. Kazimierz Marek Wolsza

em. dr hab. Ryszard Wiśniewski, prof. UMK i UJD

Redakcja i korekta

Klaudia Bień

Projekt okładki

Studio Photo Design – Lesław Sławiński

Typografia i łamanie

Jacek Zaryczny

ISBN 978-83-7614-712-3 (Print)

ISBN 978-83-7614-704-8 (Online)

Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ignatianum w Krakowie

ul. Kopernika 26 • 31-501 Kraków

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<http://wydawnictwo.ignatianum.edu.pl>

Druk i oprawa: HORN PRINT S.J. • Poznań

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