Human Rights and Polish Dissident Traditions: the Civic Republican Perspective

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> [Ours is the] task of resisting vigilantly, thoughtfully and attentively [...] we must not be shamed that we are capable of love, friendship, solidarity, sympathy, and tolerance, but just the opposite: we must set these fundamental dimensions of our humanity free from the 'private' exile and accept them as the only genuine starting point of meaningful human community
> (Václav Havel, 1991).

> Even when I am at a loss to define the meaning of freedom, I know full well the meaning of captivity
> (Adam Zagajewski, 1983).

This paper looks at adaptations of the concept of 'human rights' within three different democratic traditions defined as individual liberalism, socialism and civic republicanism. Its wider context is the issue of human rights discourses in late-communist Poland, and thus its main research question is which of those traditions potentially provides the most consistent and viable theoretical and analytic framework to address the question of human rights and democracy under post-totalitarian conditions. The goal is therefore to suggest that the East European conceptualizations of human rights should be studied within one of these traditions (civic republicanism) and to open up research space for further explorations.

Focussing on the relationship between democratization and human rights, it assumes that far too often this relationship has been taken for granted and subsequently oversimplified as natural, and prevalently coherent and harmonious. This study problematizes that assumed compatibility between democratization and human rights as a result of 'a highly contingent historical process' (Geuss, 2001: 3). Therefore the general focus of the analysis is not on what the relationship is, but rather on what it is claimed to be in different paradigms of democratic thinking.

Here I examine how human rights and their democratic relevance are presented within three democratic traditions (liberal, socialist and republican) taking as a point of departure an essay of two French political philosophers, Ferry and Renaut (1992). The reason for introducing Ferry and Renaut is to obtain guidelines for a meaningful delimitation of such (otherwise broad and disputed) traditions in order to bring up their specific contribution to the 'human rights - democracy dilemma'. In addition, the intention is to avoid presenting these different views on human rights and democracy in an artificial separation from each other, but rather to structure them in the form of a 'dialogue' so as to emphasize their historically dialectical relation. This paper follows Ferry and Renaut's construction of the liberal and socialist accounts of rights as dissonant and traditionally polemical, and subsequently presents the civic republican approach as an intermediate position.

This paper gives a clear preference to the civic republican tradition of rights as the most relevant and promising for the study of human rights discourses in socialist contexts. It is important to emphasize that this tradition is regarded here as a 'middle way' approach not only in the sense that it constitutes an alternative to the antithetical liberal and socialist views, but in a more pragmatic sense, i.e. as positioned 'in-between' them. It means that contemporary republicanism has repeatedly related to and reflected upon elements essential for those two traditions, not through their eclectic adaptation, but through deconstruction of the radical liberal and socialist opposition.

The next area of concern brought up in this exploration is how the civic republican views relate to the late-communist Polish context, in particular as regards the democratic conceptions of human rights developed within the dissident milieus. This is dealt with in the final section, which lays out those aspects of the dissident theory of politics that have previously been identified as relevant for Western civic republicanism. The aim is to indicate their parallelisms and construct a combined theoretical approach for the subsequent analysis.

In other words, this paper includes three sections, which can be summarized by the three following questions:

(i) What are the competing liberal and socialist visions of human rights and democracy?
(ii) What is the republican perspective on these issues, and how does it position itself in relation to the liberal and socialist visions?
(iii) Is the dissident theorization of politics in late communism 'republican enough' to assume that republicanism offers a pertinent and novel view on the study of the dissident articulations of human rights and democracy?

1. Consensus or 'dissensus'? Human rights in the liberal and socialist perspective

Ferry and Renaut (1992) analyze different conceptions of human rights that can be traced in the modern democratic currents. The starting point for their reflections is what they term a 'consensus-dissensus' paradox. It is rooted in the broad contemporary consensus on the importance of human rights (and in particular their necessity for any effectively functioning democracy) articulated by proponents of different political views. This general agreement on the absolute necessity of human rights in contemporary democracies is nevertheless accompanied by a lack of consensus as to which human rights have particular democratic importance. In this sense the 'consensus-dissensus' paradox reflects the extensive positive connotations that human rights enjoy nowadays combined with disagreements on their particular meanings and contextual interpretations. It also signifies a broader question of human rights as a persistently problematic issue for democratic theory, or political theory in general, regardless of their growing importance in 'practical' politics (Mendus, 1995: 10-11).

Ferry and Renaut distinguish between three main democratic discourses on human rights: individual liberal, socialist and civic republican; and each of those discourses prioritizes its 'own' group of rights: security, subsistence, and participation rights respectively. The claim is that the liberal and socialist conceptions of rights have historically developed in contradistinction to each other (Murphy, 1992: 13-14). They are characterized by differentiations they propose within the category of human rights: the liberal view gives precedence to the security of citizens (civil and political rights), whereas the social-

ist view emphasizes the issues of subsistence (socio-economic rights). Traditionally, this distinction has been addressed as a separation between 'negative' and 'positive' rights, and in contemporary human rights thinking it roughly translates into first and second generation rights.

The issue of differentiation within the category of human rights is regarded by Ferry and Renaut as an evidence of a much deeper incompatibility between the liberal and socialist discourses. The point is that human rights do not exist 'in [a] social and moral vacuum, [but are] defined by the presence of certain collective goods and shared understandings' (Bellamy, 2000: 146). They must be therefore seen in the context of their political, philosophical and ideological origin and development (Ferry & Renaut, 1992: 10). The divergent conceptions of rights are hence treated as derivative of more fundamental discussions on (i) the definition of 'rights', (ii) the nature of democracy, (iii) the relationship between democracy and the institution of law, and (iv) the dominant conception of social liberty. These are addressed respectively in the passage below.

As already indicated, the distinction between the conceptions of security and subsistence rights is often paralleled by that between civil and political rights on the one hand, and socio-economic ones on the other. Civil and political rights are claimed to be 'negative' in the sense that their realization requires non-interference from the norm-receiving agency (the state). The socio-economic category of rights is, by analogy, called 'positive' because they supposedly require the norm-receiver to take certain action or interfere on behalf of the individual. With positive rights there is a subsequent change in governmental obligations as their practice requires that the state adopts a much more affirmative role in the process of rights protection. The reason is that the subsistence rights are 'designed in legal terms to meet basic human needs not otherwise satisfied by the socioeconomic system' (Claude, 1976: 42). This distinction has inspired Ferry and Renaut to specify that it is not primarily the content of rights-claims that allows distinguishing between the liberal and socialist conceptions of rights. Much more important is that these are in fact two distinctively different understandings of the concept of 'rights': in the liberal definition they are synonymous with 'permissions', whereas in the socialist understanding they function as 'entitlements' (Ferry & Renaut, 1992: 17). Thus their primary dissimilarity is not that the socialist version is broader and more inclusive than the liberal one, but that it is of a different genus

(Bellamy, 2000: 143-144). This consequently brings up an issue of two different understandings of individual freedom, which in liberal discourse means formal guarantees of citizen autonomy, whereas in socialist discourse it is intrinsically linked to the idea of social justice and the quality of distribution.

In addition, liberal and socialist discourses on human rights employ two different understandings of democracy, 'political' and 'social' (Ferry & Renaut, 1992: 18). In the former type the democratic rules of governance (based on the ideal of popular sovereignty and the institution of representation) are applied to the political sphere, with strict borderlines established between the public and private spheres. The socialist conception, in contrast, aims 'not only at political equality […], but also the at-least-partial equalization of conditions of life' (Ferry & Renaut, 1992: 18). Thus, liberalism puts forth '[…] the idea of a *minimal stat*e limited to protecting its citizens' autonomy, [socialism promotes] a *welfare state* that, through positive benefits and services, can contribute to the birth of that "material security" guaranteed to every person' (Ferry & Renaut, 1992: 18, emphasis in the original). Here the socialist conception is based on the ideal of a state that acts, protects and is responsible for the well-being of its citizens.

The outlined divergent concepts of 'rights' and 'democracy' are further accompanied by different understandings of the institution of law. Liberal individualism, to paraphrase Hobbes, is centered on the vision of 'the silent law'. Its legal paradigm provides the beneficiaries of rights with a set of formal guarantees which protect people from state interference. It guarantees that the citizens may achieve goods not through their direct provision but through creating the framework of possibilities for actions. On the other side there is the socialist (positive) conception of law, which 'intervene[s] in the social sphere, notably to ensure a better distribution of wealth and to correct inequalities' (Ferry & Renaut, 1992: 18). Central to the socialist argumentation is the claim that social and economic inequalities should not remain confined to the private domain, because they translate into public power relations. It becomes thus apparent that socialism does not simply employ different conceptions of the same basic human rights. Ultimately it is looking for another sort of community, involving different qualities of personal development and social interaction to those available within a liberal economic and political system (Bellamy, 2000: 151).

Finally, the difference between the liberal and socialist democratic representations is reflected in the conceptions of 'negative' and 'positive' liberty they embrace. In this context Skinner defines the liberal paradigm of negative liberty as the 'absence of constraint' on one's body and will. Social freedom is inter-subjective, synonymous with the opportunity for certain actions, and 'relational to power' (Skinner, 1995a). In contrast, the socialist (positive) model of liberty implies a radical shift in the conceptualization of freedom as absence: positive liberty is tantamount to persons' self-realization (Skinner, 1995d). This tradition denies that social liberty is intersubjective (it is not necessarily a result of external coercion), that it implies a choice or possibility to act in a certain way (rather, the focus is on the action itself) or that it corresponds to power.

2. Civic republicanism as a 'middle way' approach

The preceding section has shown that human rights conceptions within the liberal and social democratic approaches are very different and have historically and philosophically developed in opposition to each other. This paper claims that the civic republican tradition has the potential to offer a helpful 'synthesis' of the liberal and socialist discourses, and that it proposes a very interesting democratic interpretation of human rights for two main reasons (Ifversen, 1999: 325). First of all, it shows that the concept of human rights loses nothing of its significance and moral weight if understood as an inter-subjectively developed, integral element of political community and the practice of citizenry, and not as a natural, or pre-political quality (Ingram, 1995). Secondly, it treats the relationship between democracy and human rights as a two-sided and reciprocal one, and thus is qualitatively different from the liberal and socialist understandings of rights as 'guidelines' for or 'limitations' of democratic developments. The republican argumentation is based on a recognition that human rights and democracy are two correlating dynamics: not only do certain types of rights promote certain types of democracy, but given democratic forms also condition the development of human rights in a particular direction.

The republican view introduces a category of 'participation rights'. It is grounded in both the negative and positive conceptions of freedom, not only in the sense that its definition may require both negative and positive measures (Oldfield, 1990: 153), but in a deeper sense captured by Márkus (1999: 281-282) in his thesis of the compatibility of negative and positive freedoms

under contemporary conditions of democracy. Republican rights include both civil-political and socio-economic issues. This conception is based on an understanding of social freedom as an absence of constraint on a citizen, or non-dominance (Skinner, 1998: 84).

The view presented here is that the republican theory of freedom rooted in the non-dominance paradigm can also perfectly well accommodate (and indeed requires) certain positive components provided these are delineated in accordance with Márkus' (1999: 282-284) definition of positive freedom as 'the capacity for political participation […] to realize ends which [individuals] have autonomously chosen for themselves'. The idea is to question the apparent necessity of locating the negative and positive freedoms in opposition to each other, and instead depict them as complementary. This is possible, Márkus suggests, if the deconstruction of this dichotomy does away with the conventional understanding of negative and positive freedom as the lack of 'external obstacle versus internal impediment', respectively, and instead conceptualizes them as 'formal possibility' versus 'actual capacity' (1999: 282). This alternative definition of positive freedom, which emphasizes the actual conditions for political participation, complements the negative liberty within the republican tradition because it is 'necessary for the continuous maintenance and realization of a system of negative freedom' (i.e. non-dependence or non-dominance). The republican discourse of the East European dissidents, which is the focus of the rest of this paper, confirms that their ideas about human rights and democracy require that liberty as 'non-dominance' is accompanied by liberty as 'participation', because it is largely through the latter that the former is achieved.

Crucial for understanding 'participation rights' as characteristics of the republican theory of liberty is their political dimension. This can be explained through the Arendtian conception of 'public freedom', which locates individual autonomy within the political sphere and links it to 'direct participation in politics by ordinary citizens' (Canovan, 1998: 39). As Goldfarb maintains

> [The republican] freedom is the condition in which the individual in a community […] may, if it is within her or his capacities, make a significant mark in the presence of others. […] Freedom is constituted by politics. Freedom is not located in the region of the individual life unconstrained by political interference, as the liberals believe, nor is it

realized in the act of collective liberation and achievement, as Marxists believe. Rather, Arendt finds it situated in the defense of and actions in an autonomous public realm, in which individuals can live and act in their plurality, according to their own principles, but essentially in interaction with others (1989: 129).

Arendt's (1991: 58) close conceptual linkage between the sphere of politics and freedom is derived from the ancient Greek metaphor of politics as performing art. In this interpretation freedom becomes an action conducted in accordance with guiding ethical principles and is tantamount to social status of a person in community, which was based on collective political participation and public deliberation. The argument here is that this conceptualization of freedom as an inter-subjective action makes it the very reason 'why men live in political organization at all' (Arendt, 1991: 58), because 'men are free as long as they act [politically], neither before nor after' (Arendt, 1991: 64). Thus the republican freedom is actually 'defined by reference to certain set of political arrangements' (Miller, 1991: 2) and a particular understanding of politics. Through her republican depiction of the inseparability of freedom and politics, Arendt creates the possibility for analyzing participation rights as necessary for any civic activity (and thus as a precondition of liberty).

The directive principle here is that human rights should empower people politically in accordance with the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty. Taking their starting-point in the tentative designation of specific 'participation rights', Ferry and Renaut explain in what sense the republican alternative constitutes a 'middle way' between the liberal and socialist views. It namely identifies and delimits their 'common field' through the introduction of the concept of 'political community'. It builds upon the idea of collective identities, social interdependencies and a certain degree of collective solidarity. Through the term 'community' the republican vision of 'political community' can be thus recognisable and appreciated within the socialist viewpoint due to the latter's emphasis on societal bonds, commonalities, and interdependencies. On the other hand, republicanism distances itself from the socialist thinking, because it includes the qualifier 'political', which indicates that it is a legally formalised community, different from a mere social collective (Ifversen, 1999: 326). Moreover, the political character of the community is regarded as a necessary prerequisite to act as a rights guarantor at all. For an individual citizen it implies that 'in order to have rights one must be part of a legal and political community both [...] to be able to show one's human-

ity through action and to be recognized as a legal person' (Rostbøll, 1998: 17). Alternatively, the notion of the 'political' reflects the possibility for republicanism's common language with liberalism. Both are concerned with the conditions and dynamics of the 'political' or the 'public', which they view as a domain for state-societal interactions. However, the major difference in that respect is that the republican reading of relations within that sphere goes far beyond the liberal concept of 'representation'. It includes (i) the sense of solidarity and emotional attachment to the community (rather than mere obedience to its laws) and (ii) continuous engagement in its political life through the practices of democratic dialogue, deliberation and public justification. The republican notion of 'political community' has in this context a strong communitarian appeal because it accentuates 'not that which differentiates individuals from each other and from the community, but rather what they share with other individuals, and what integrates them into the community' (Oldfield, 1990: 145). Another important difference between the liberal and the republican understanding of the 'political' or 'public' area is its demarcation: in the view of the former it is closely related to the conception of (popular) control, whereas for the latter it rather indicates being of public relevance or interest (Honohan, 2002: 159).

Here it becomes apparent that the republican discourse on rights is concerned with a type of democracy substantially different from the two models presented before. Dissimilar as they are, they both treat the issues of citizens' active involvement in the political sphere as secondary to their performances in the private and economic spheres, whereas the model promoted by republicanism emphasizes the importance of human rights for citizens' ability 'to influence the input into the political system' (Rostbøll, 1998: 62). At the risk of some simplification, one of the main differences between these views is hence how they position rights in relation to the borderlines of the political. For liberalism rights have a meta-political character in the sense that liberties take precedence over democratic self-government. Popular sovereignty and rights are only incidentally related: rights constrain, and remain in opposition to, democracy (Sandel, 1996: 25). The conception of politics that prevails here is that of an accumulation of private interests that the state is obliged to secure, but for which it potentially also creates a threat (Miller, 1991: 3). For socialism rights are outside the political in yet another sense: the objection is that rights and democracy are qualities, which should not be restrained to the public domain, but should also be directive for private (economic) concerns. For republicanism, in contrast, there is no place for rights outside the political community: rights are politically conditioned and historically developed.

They are 'not absolute, natural, pre-political [...] moral constraints on a subsequent moral order, [but] politically constructed and guaranteed [and] can evolve in the light of conditions for self-government, through deliberation' (Honohan, 2002: 207-210). As Bellamy asserts:

> Within the civic republican tradition we […] have our rights as a result of performing our *duties* as citizens. Those rights we do have emerge from a political struggle regulated by certain democratic procedures. There is no guarantee of course that such rights will be either liberal or socialist - it will depend on the will of the community concerned. The safeguards for individual freedom emerge from the distribution of power such mechanisms afford (2000: 156-7, emphasis in original).

3. The East European republicans

The final section of this article brings in the problematic of East European dissidence. It demonstrates that civic republicanism provides an attractive theoretical approach for the study of democratic and human rights conceptualizations in dissident discourse. It also shows that owing to its specific political and cultural location, this discourse can make a valuable contribution to some of the contemporary civic republican debates.

Of interest here is the oeuvre of two Polish dissident theorists of politics, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron. A dual analytic perspective is applied, in that the focus is on both their reflections concurrent with their oppositionist activities in the 1970s and early 1980s, and on their retrospective (i.e. post-Cold War) thoughts about these events and their oppositionist ideals. The assumption is that, sudden and unpredicted as it was, the regime collapse in Poland in 1989 (and subsequently across the whole communist bloc in Europe) had little bearing on the dissidents' democratic perceptions, but instead offered them a valuable and more distanced perspective on their activities, standpoints and ideals. Therefore the inclusion of those two narrative perspectives aims to emphasize continuity and a conceptual linkage between them. More specifically, this article brings up two issues identified as crucial for grasping the republican conception of human rights, namely the question of (i) political community (and the very understanding of politics as such) and (ii) the practice of citizenship. As will be shown here, the former notion is thoroughly elaborated in Michnik's writings, whereas the latter is epitomized in Kuron's ideas about 'self-organization'.

First, however, it needs to be noted that constructing a linkage between the republican tradition and the East European dissident theory of politics is by no means a novel undertaking per se. Such an endeavour has been attempted before and considered legitimate for at least three reasons. First, on a number of occasions the intellectual influence of the Western civic republicans was confirmed by the oppositionists themselves, notably Michnik and Havel (Canovan, 1998: 55). Second, the dynamics of dissidence in Eastern Europe attracted the attention of some contemporary republican thinkers (for example, Arendt's reflections on the phenomenon of political and social revolution were largely inspired by events in Hungary in 1956). And third, a number of observers and analysts of the post-1968 opposition movements in East Europe (e.g. in the creation of Solidarity) interpreted them as an Arendtian moment of free human action. They described them as 'citizen movements that actively invoked the idea of citizenship' (Lukas, 1991: 314) and drew parallels between the East European concepts of civil society and anti-politics and republican ideas about 'radicalized' democracy.

What is the focus of this section, however, are not direct cross-references between dissidents in East Europe and civic republicans in the West, but rather implicit interrelations and intellectual parallels between these two political narratives. The belief is that this could potentially open up spaces for reading these two traditions as complementary and mutually informative. In 1976 Michnik wrote his path-breaking essay 'A New Evolutionism', which was considered to be a program of action for the Polish dissidents in the 1970s and a representation of their political attitudes, motivations and goals (Falk, 2003: 177). It announced the invalidity of revisionism and reformism as dissent strategies and acknowledged that Marxism as a critical theory and instrument of oppositional action had lost its intellectual and political power of attraction (Kolakowski, 1999: 352-369; Michnik, 1984a: 86, 2001). 'A New Evolutionism' was thus indicative of the new democratic dissident movement, which was no longer focused on reforming the present communist system, but which put forth a distinctively different model of society and economy. This 'alternative social model' (Taras, 1992: 4) was based on a novel conception of politics, which had strong ethical underpinnings and shared a belief in reformation of the individual as a necessary condition for social and political renewal. Michnik stated that there was a strong distinction between politics understood in generic terms as the 'business of governments' (Ost, 1990: 2) and what became known as 'anti-politics': an independent sphere of public communication, interaction and cooperation. The former was to be rejected (but not any more directly opposed!), and the latter developed into a vibrant political community. From a perspective of over two decades later

Michnik confirmed that the idiosyncrasy of the democratic opposition was exactly that it positioned itself as antithetical to a regime that was inherently anti-democratic and hostile to human rights: this was a 'world of dictatorship' in which 'white [opposed] black, and total Truth [opposed] absolute Lies' (Demenet, 2001). Michnik thus objected to the official discourse about 'socialism with a human face' when referring to the political system in Poland in 1970s. Rather, he claimed, it was 'a totalitarian communism with broken teeth' (Blair, 1998: 104). The simple reasons to oppose it were that such a system was '[inherently] totalitarian and objected to human rights' (Michnik, 1998c: 145).

The distinction between the broad and specific understandings of politics was by no means innovative as such; rather, as Zuzowski argues, it indicated a return to the narrow Aristotelian conception of politics defined as 'government based on conciliation' (Zuzowski, 1992: 8). Such politics was founded in 'peaceful methods of solving disagreements', as the term conciliation indicated 'discussion and negotiation' (Zuzowski, 1992: 8-9). A crucial element in this Aristotelian conception of politics was a lack of violence and coercion. Commitment to non-violence thus became one of the fundamental components of the dissident ethos in the 1970s: 'military-political contest' was replaced by 'introduction and increase of the multilayered activities and organizations associated with normal civic life' (Falk, 2003). In civic republican terms this 'ethical aversion to coercive methods' (Bugajski & Pollack, 1989: 86) meant that engagement in and deliberation of issues that were of public relevance constituted an alternative to the earlier oppositionist dilemma 'reform or revolution'. In the context of the Aristotelian conception Michnik re-defines the notion of politics: he not only objects to the hegemony of the official political definitions, but unmasks the underlying neo-totalitarian mechanisms of power, which de facto remain antithetical to politics, because they destroy 'citizenship rights and responsibilities' (Goldfarb, 1989: 143).

In order to understand these political conceptualizations of the Polish dissidents, one needs to situate them deep in the Polish tradition of democratic thought (Blair 1998, 105; Michnik, 1998b). In this tradition democracy is not based exclusively on certain institutional arrangements but primarily

> Concerns the human condition and human rights, […] entails a vision of tolerance, an understanding of the importance of cultural traditions, and the realization that cherished human values can conflict with each other. […] The essence of democracy as I understand it is freedom - the freedom which belongs to citizens endowed with a con-

science (Michnik in Blair, 1998: 105).

The reason for calling those spontaneously formed and quasi-autonomous domains of public interactions a 'political community' is not only an acknowledgement of close mutual ties among its members, but also the recognition that in the condition of post-totalitarianism this societal interdependence automatically gains an important political quality. Belonging to that group, communication between its members and their collective identities acquired political aspects in the sense that they were formed as a protest against the governing autocratic apparatus, though no longer focused directly on it. This system negated the very conditions of politics, such as unchangeable societal diversity, scarcity of goods, particularity of interests, pluralism of views and opinions, etc. (Lukes, 1991: 314). Recognition by the critical intellectuals of the inevitability and intransigence of those conditions signified therefore a return to politics. In this sense Michnik's understanding of post-totalitarianism resembles the Arendtian conception; the essence of totalitarianism was not that it politicized all spheres of societal life, but that it did exactly the contrary, namely abolished politics or denied its necessity (Blair, 1998; Michnik, 2003).

When characterizing the Polish oppositional movement in the 1970s Kuron stated that the very nature of post-totalitarianism gives rise to its negation because the post-totalitarian tendency to control is so socially destructive that individual opposition becomes a necessary, 'natural' and possibly even unintentional form of self-defense. An important part of the oppositional movement is therefore any group of neighbors, friends, family, etc. that discusses matters of public concern. However, says Kuron, it does not become a 'political opposition' before its participants 'become aware of the political character of their actions' (Kuron, 1984: 109). Retrospectively, he confirms that the authoritarian character of the Polish socialist regime resulted in the total impossibility of achieving any form of social agreement (Kuron, 2001). Nevertheless, the power of the democratic opposition in Poland was exactly that it managed to politicize itself as a social movement in the absence of any institutional channels of influence characteristic of political democracy (Kuron, 2001).

This 'political community' is therefore formed as a result of the creation of close interpersonal bonds, collective undertakings and awareness of their political implications. One of its most crucial components is the ethos of

openness and solidarity because 'an effective social movement can emerge only when all resistance groups share common goals' (Zielonka, 1989: 18). In addition, there is a deep sense of a common good of its members. The interesting aspect here is, however, that it is understood not in terms of a concrete 'corporate good', but as a veto against a 'common evil' of the post-totalitarian condition (Michnik, 2003). This is an unambiguous and broadly shared vision, which has a very powerful cementing effect on that community and cuts across the ideological and political borderlines: 'there is one common enemy [that unites us all]', says Kuron, 'the social and political system in our country' (Kuron, 1984: 125). Oppositional society, understood as a 'political community' is therefore united in its resistance against common evil. To put it rather simplistically, the Polish dissidents might have differed as to what (political, economic, ideological) system they wanted, but they were in full agreement about what they did not want (Blair 1998; Husarska 1998).

This oppositional political community recognizes its own internal diversity and plurality, indeed cherishes that diversity, but achieves a unity in that it repudiates the all-pervasive state. Michnik's conception of a 'parallel polis' is exactly a robust political community with a strong sense of common good, born out of an equally strong sense of common evil (Michnik, 1999). It is cohesive and held together, regardless of any ideological, political, program differences, because of the shared moral values of 'a choice of truth against power, courage to name things as they are, […] integral resistance to the effects of totalitarianism' (Michnik, 1985a: 7). Such a vision of the 'common good' is not future-oriented: it is not a goal of liberation to be fought for and prospectively achieved, and consequently it is not result of resistance, but its very process. This shared vision that binds the community together is to 'live in dignity' (Kolakowski, 1971) or 'demand the truth' (Michnik 1985a: 87), which means, to translate these claims into 'republican language', the practice of civic virtues (such as public awareness and involvement, honesty and truthfulness, readiness to take responsibility for one's actions and to sacrifice private interests and benefits) in the face of post-totalitarian challenge. In this context, the dissidents perceived themselves as 'a voice of conscience of the conquered nation' (Demenet), which was based on a 'specific ethos […] of human rights and of […] the power of the powerless' (Michnik, 1999).

In addition the question of ethics or moral necessity was considered by the dissidents to be the very raison d'être for their involvement in opposition, or, as Michnik puts it, the reason for the politicization of their lives (Blair 1998,

96-97). Kuron characterizes the post-1968 oppositional generation as one that perceives its political involvement as a 'moral imperative' or 'moral obligation' (Kuron, 1984: 112). Michnik made it also explicit that his political activity is ethically motivated when he wrote:

> I am not a politician. I never wanted to be a politician. My political involvement is not a result of a chosen profession, but of my temper and a moral option. I have found the world of politics repulsive - in this world I have always felt confused and powerless… but then, politics grew into my life (Michnik, 1985a: 6).

And even more poignantly:

> Our need to rebel stemmed from the conviction that, as long as the world is the way it is, it is worth not dying a peaceful death in your bed (Demenet, 2001).

In Michnik's view the real power of this quasi-independent political community is its capacity for introducing change into the individual lives of citizens. The most important 'battle' was taking place at the level of the individual citizen, and the dissident action should counter-balance the post-totalitarian effects on people's personal sphere. For Michnik the 'real danger' of 'real socialism' was that it transformed individuals, because it promoted cynicism, opportunism, indifference in regard to public matters and self-concern. Therefore the regime should be opposed by ethically informed politics through a change of personal life that remained antithetical to the conditions of Polish communism. The real value of their oppositional organization KOR was therefore that 'it has come to represent a certain model of collective behavior [being] the combination of a relentless struggle for human rights and a refusal of violence' (quoted in Jowitt, 1998: 5).

Where Michnik ends the presentation of his vision of political community developed as a form of societal self-defense against the effect of post-totalitarianism, Kuron introduces his paradigm of 'self-organization' and shows what implication Michnik's vision has for the practice of citizenship. This model of 'self-organization' parallels the republican ideas of a conscious and engaged citizenry. If, says Kuron, the goal of dissident action is to create and nurture independent spheres that would not be subject to governmental control, and would be developed in accordance with the ethos of solidarity and

openness, it can only be achieved when 'society organize[s] itself into social movements, interacting on each other, expressing as fully as possible the aspirations of all' (Kuron, 1977: 69, quoted. in Falk, 2003: 189). Retrospectively, Kuron reflected that

> […] the idea [was] for people to organize themselves. That is the revolution - the most peaceful one you can imagine - that will abolish the system where the state monopolizes the organization of people. Suddenly the citizens are doing it themselves. They are able to do it themselves. And from the moment they do it, everything changes (1981, quoted. in Zielonka, 1989: 29).

Kuron's conception of 'self-organization' indicated therefore that the project of creating space for meaningful deliberation about public matters would require 'constant formation and reformation of initiatives, movements and organizations' (Falk, 2003). It meant that effective political opposition could only be based on a strong social movement, and thus on a widespread and multileveled 'self-organization' (Kuron, 2001). The particular goal of 'self-organization' would therefore be, as Michnik claims, 'to build a democratic society which [would] render totalitarianism impossible' (in Blair, 1998: 107). What is particularly interesting in Kuron's position is his radical understanding of democracy, which goes far beyond procedural parliamentary democracy. Rather, it is synonymous with a 'continually expanding sphere of non-coerced social activity' (Falk, 2003). In his essay on the desired form of Polish opposition, Kuron makes it explicit that even though the objective to be achieved is parliamentary democracy, it is by no means an ultimate goal:

> I declare that in the system of parliamentary democracy I will [support] direct democracy. Nevertheless, without representative (parliamentary) democracy, direct democracy is absolutely powerless when it confronts the state. […] Totalitarianism abolishes any freedom of man, citizen, worker. The crucial advantage of parliamentary democracy is its conditions, which make it possible to overcome its limitations (Kuron, 1984: 131).

Finally, Michnik's and Kuron's writings deliberate in detail on the question of individual rights. My reflection here is that at this point distinctively liberal elements become combined with their strong republican inclinations. Human rights guarantee individual autonomy understood both as personal sovereignty (possibility of self-determination) and as non-interference. The argu-

ment here is that the 'meeting point' for both dimensions is that the objective of human rights is to enable an individual to function as a 'subject' in his/her political environment (Kuron, 1984: 107). The political context and societal dependence are acknowledged; nevertheless, the focus is clearly on the individual citizen and the prospects for his/her autonomy. The 'neo-evolutionist' strategy is in fact understood as a continuous struggle to deepen human rights and civic freedoms (Michnik, 1984: 83; 2001b). In addition, as Michnik paraphrases Tocqueville, they

> help to name what is oppression and tyranny. Thanks to the concept of human rights people could gain independence without becoming egocentric, and at the same time become subordinate without losing their dignity (Michnik, 1984: 101).

4. Conclusions

This paper has suggested that human rights conceptualizations in the East European theory of politics and dissidence could be profitably approached from the civic republican perspective. It has given an outline of different adaptations of rights in the liberal, socialist and republican traditions. In the light of these traditions human rights are seen as guarantees of either 'individual security', 'collective provision', or 'political participation'. The republican view of human rights has been distinguished as the one which puts the greatest emphasis on the democratic function of human rights and the relation of interdependence between human rights and democracy. Further, the republican account of human rights has been described as a 'middle way perspective' due to its accommodative (though also modifying) approach towards the liberal conception of 'legal and political representation of rights' and the socialist conception of 'community', within which rights are exercised. This article has also demonstrated that the conception of human rights offered by republicanism is rooted in its particular vision of politics, democratic community and active citizenship. If republicanism is therefore to be employed as a beneficial theoretical perspective for the study of human rights and democracy discourses in Poland since 1970s, all these three elements should be traced in the Polish dissident theory of politics. Therefore the last section of this article looks at the oeuvre of Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron, two important theorists of politics and at the same time representatives of the Polish dissident movement, and traces how conceptions of politics, com-

munity and citizenship are reflected in their ideas about 'anti-politics', alternative society and 'self-organization'.

This paper signified that a bridge between Western republican thinking and its East European version is both possible and rewarding. The idea was to stress their resemblance in many important aspects, but also to avoid employing 'foreign paradigms' for the study of politically and culturally specific phenomena, and to emphasize the interrelation and interdependence of what is often artificially divided into 'theory' and 'practice'. In this way the dissident democratic and human rights discourse in Poland can be studied with direct reference to, and in the context of, the republican theory of politics from which, I assume, it originated and of which (both historically and intellectually) it has been an integral element.

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