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Categories of 'Political Actor' and 'Political Agency' as Research Objects of Polish Political Theorists

Abstract: The aim of the article is to present the history of research on the categories of “political actor” and “political agency” conducted by Polish political scientists. The article shows how they were defined and how the theories of society and politics prevalent at a given time shaped their understanding. Initially, both categories alluded to the collective vision of activity, to finally appreciate the role of individuals in initiating activity. The way researchers viewed the significance of political actors was changing over time as well; at the beginning, social classes and subsequently large groups were seen as crucial, while individuals were only eventually recognised as the source of agency. The article demonstrates that both categories have changed over the years, adapted to new social order, social structure and, in particular, to the ideologies prevalent in society. The article pays special attention to the concepts developed by Mirosław Karwat and Andrzej Czajowski.

Keywords: social order, political agency, political actor, Marxism, political science

Introduction

The theoretical categories of “political actor” and “political agency” are an original achievement of Polish political science. Centuries of philosophical reflection, mainly about the human condition and nature, contributed to their creation. The reflection on human agency began with Descartes, who built foundations

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for a new relationship between man and reality, rejected fatalism and clarified the principles of activism and determinism, freedom, and causative power of the actor (Kozłowski, 2006, p. 11). The theoriocognitive, philosophical, anthropological, historiosophical, and ethical (Karwat, 2018, p. 158) anchoring of political agency ensured its “power of influence”, especially when it saw the human being as an “agentive being”, when the human being was assigned new tasks to perform, but even when it was realised that the actor “is not a source in relation to language, but comes into being in and through it” (Sawczyński, 2016, p. 10). The importance of human activism for the formation of both categories was not even altered by the “death” of the actor (Nowak, 2011, p. 8) proclaimed by Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault or by a thorough reconstruction of the very idea of the actor. There were many re-evaluations of human agency in the philosophical thinking conducted over the centuries, for example the replacement of the environmental and biological determination of the individual with their self-determination i.e., the internal source of causality inherent in the individual. In philosophy, the concept of agency was employed to analyse the circumstances of both individual and collective actors; it also functioned as an ontological supposition regarding the nature of social life and a demand regarding the structure of good order (Cichocki, 1998, p. 9).

Agency also constituted the focus of social studies (Nowak, 1989, pp. 71–108) with an empirical orientation (Sotwin, 2003) because of its relationship with social change. It inspired psychologists and sociologists², who sought to “strip” it of its axiological burdens. Psychologists sought agency by studying identity, the forms and location of control over the environment, the formation of a sense of agency and alienation, as well as by explaining mechanisms relating to personality control (Spendel, 1994, pp. 30–39; Cichocki, 1998, p. 9). Psychologists’ realisations were oriented towards capturing this category as both a description of agency and the emergence of a “sense of agency” (Zieliński, 1983, p. 77). In social psychology, agency occurred in the research on self-determination, purposefulness of actions, an individual’s autonomy, freedom of choice, control over the environment, as well as in the study of the phenomena of learned helplessness. Most often, agency was located in the relationship of the individual with the social environment (Cichocki, 2003, pp. 18, 45). Sociological research on agency, on the other hand, was anchored “between philosophical considerations of the objective states of the actor from the point of view of absolute values and psychological studies of ‘feelings’ related to individual agency values” (Cichocki, 1998, p. 10). Most analyses concerned the existing relationships between acting groups and individuals, as well as the extent to which individuals influence

² Although “agency is a somewhat dubious category within sociology” due to the difficulty of operationalising the concept and translating it into measurable quantities (Cichocki, 1998, pp. 7–8).

social structures (Sztompka, 1989, pp. 12–13). Additionally, the effects of agency on the behaviour of collective actors and its implications for the liberation of underprivileged groups were examined (Cichocki, 2003, p. 46). Research also focused on the factors activating agency.

However, it was mainly the philosophical findings on agency that inspired political scientists and translated into their elaborate visions of political actors (Obuchowski, 2000) and their relations with the social environment. Political scientists' theoretical considerations of both categories also used the knowledge of agency of other disciplines. The resulting concepts of the categories under discussion were determined by questions and answers concerning the basis of political action, the drivers of political change, the role and place of individuals and groups in particular systems and their actual causative power. Political agency was also determined by answers to questions about the emergence of systems, their axiological basis, as well as the actual factors determining not only socio-political changes but also their course. Other important questions concerned changes in social structures, the condition of the components and their determining influences. Without answers to the above questions, in the concepts of agency, the proposed forms of activity were impossible to justify and lost the possibility of a real transformation of reality. It seems that what was important for defining political agency, was the establishment of a catalogue of political actors and a precise description of the relationship between individuals and groups. It was also confirmed by "competing" sociological concepts: from evolutionist concepts to theories of the agency of society and the individual. Tadeusz Klementewicz, analysing these relations, wrote about their axis, formed between agentic creativity and structural determination (2010, p. 108).

The article aims to show the most important Polish concepts of political agency. It does not deal with their criticism or assess their degree of relevance or usefulness. It attempts to show how these categories changed over time, what forms they adopted on and how they "built relationships" with theories of society and politics. It is based on a review and analysis of the literature on the subject. The analysed concepts of political agency first focused on collectivist actors, exclusively social classes, appreciating their role and importance to the greatest extent. In contrast, individuals as political actors (Tobiasz, 2013, p. 98) were first recognised as direct but secondary actors. Over time, there was a greater appreciation of the role of individuals, who were eventually given equal status with collective actors. Consequently, considered before 1989, the problem whether the political actor has a collectivist or individual character is of secondary importance nowadays. Political actors and their hierarchy are already determined by decidedly different criteria.

The text length restrictions necessitated the author's focusing on Miroslaw Karwat's (1978, 1980, 1989a, 1989b, 2007, 2018) and Andrzej Czajowski's (2013, 2015) concepts of political agency. The text omits concepts describing the

evolution of the role of secondary actors in political life, i.e., institutions. Most of the text is devoted to Karwat's concept of agency. Philosophical inspiration for the concept came from the theory of cognition and the philosophy of history, as well as original achievements of Polish praxeology and legal theory. Its core was an idealising model of the mediated relationship between the agency of large groups and that of individuals. The article also discusses Karwat's concept of expressive agency.

Assumptions. Political agency as an enduring capacity of political actors

In the 1970s, among Polish Marxist theorists, differences in the approach to the category of political actor became apparent. The beginning of the reflection was the orthodox and schematic approach of Wsiewołod Wołczew, who saw political actors only in social classes. A departure from this position was the considerations of Artur Bodnar, Olgierd Cetwiński and Mirosław Karwat, who expanded the catalogue of political actors and created their gradation. Among them, the major role was played by large social groups in the form of classes, but also individuals as actors.

Despite the apparent differences among theorists, the starting point for the formation of the two categories in the 1970s was the link between the two categories and Marxist philosophy and theory of politics (Poprzeczko, 1988, p. 17). Therefore, reference was made to the rationality of the actor, the occurrence of conscious and deliberate political action (Karwat, 1980, pp. 27–82) that constitutes the basis of politics. Politics, as a consequence of the existence of classes, was determined by contradictions and socio-economic conditions. This concept was also influenced by historical materialism, the Marxist approach to the historical process, as well as the conviction of the dominant role played by holism, dependence, and the results of the interaction between the base and the superstructure. The adoption of the accepted forms of activism, autodynamism (Karwat, 1989b, p. 64) or restricted determinism was also significant. And it was from these forms that acceptable political action, as well as a conscious and deliberate causation was derived (Karwat, 1980, pp. 7–10). Vladimir Lenin's concept of the relationship between classes and the state was the basic foundation for interpreting politics, distinguishing class relations, the role of ideology and the system of political institutions, which are elements of the superstructure formed by social classes (Bodnar, 1984, p. 10). The association of the state with the classes vying for power translated into the definition of primary actors in politics, and politics itself was marked by antagonism and the constant struggle of the classes to gain and maintain power (Ładosz, 1968, p. 69; Bodnar, 1988b,

p. 174). Therefore, wholes, and first of all classes, were defined as the main political players capable of imposing their goals on other, deciding how goals and actions interacted, and choose types of actions for other actors (Karwat, 1980, p. 13). Fulfilling the aforementioned tasks by the classes was their historical necessity, so the classes were considered the ultimate actors, although history was influenced by the working class.

According to the above premises, the political actor was considered to be an entity that consciously, deliberately and effectively created politics and participated in it actively and relatively independently; that decided their own fate and, through their actions, generated objectivising (Bodnar, 1984, p. 144), expected, i.e., ideologically determined, consequences. Their emergence in the order being created according to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism was to be the most fully ensured by the social classes, and – primarily by the working class established on the lack of ownership of means of production. It was assumed that the effects expected and in line with ideological assumptions could not be generated by individuals. For this reason, it was emphasised that “the negation of the individualistic approach to political actors is an unquestioned (at least verbal) assumption in all works of the Marxist orientation” (Karwat, 1989b, p. 74).

On the other hand, political agency in Marxist terms meant a political actor's ability to rationally create politics, act in multiple ways, participate in politics according to their interests, as well as transform political relations. Adopting this view of agency determined the role of groups, especially the social classes. This was reflected in the scope of freedom of action offered to them as the scope of political and social responsibility imposed on them, and also influenced the formulation of objectives of particular activities. The emergence of interests in the classes was supposed to result in their becoming aware of their agency, and this awareness was the outcome of the understanding of historical circumstances and opportunities. In the case of individuals, the fact that their agency was “socially mediated”, i.e., determined by class affiliation, was emphasised. The collective aspect of agency determined individuals' participation, taking the form of interaction with other individuals within the class to which they belonged. Their participation and activity were objectivised on the political plane. It was specified by the conditions determining actors, forcing the emergence of political activity, and making it a necessity (Bodnar, 1988a). Without recourse to extra-political spheres of social life, especially the economic one, explaining political reality, including political agency, was not possible.

Mirosław Karwat's concept of political agency

The concept comprised the idea of political agency and an idealising model of intermediate relationships among the agency of large groups, political or parapolitical institutions, their bodies, teams, and units. It assumed that the wholeness (organisation) and agency of groups is of a gradual, multifaceted character that allows for comparison. Large groups' political agency level was determined by the degree of their internal integration (Karwat, 1980, p. 273). A political actor was a large social group that took action, exerted influence on the other groups and society as a whole, but also on itself, including its constituent elements. The essential feature of agency perceived in this way was the attribution of the status of the primary, fundamental and ultimate political actor to wholes, mainly the classes (the classes for themselves) (Karwat, Malinowski, 1982, pp. 11–12).

In this concept, the basic determinants of political agency were considered to be the possession of consciousness and ability to take action, as well as the generation of society-wide effects. Agency could be attributed only to beings with consciousness, which translates into the capacity to act consciously. Consciousness was linked to practical action, which emphasised the essential content of agency. However, what determined agency was neither consciousness nor action, but action that was conscious, i.e., purposeful and reasonable. When such action took place, especially in large groups, and was aimed at other groups or society at large, then political agency occurred. Impact on other actors was regarded as an essential characteristic of agency; it was meant to confirm that agency could be described by means of a social relationship (Karwat, 1980, pp. 273–277).

Agency was an attribute of integrated social wholes. Their constituent elements such as factions of groups, leadership centres or individuals occurred within their boundaries. This necessitated analysing the agency of large groups with respect to all its levels. At the same time, it was assumed that there is no full, strict identity between the agency of large groups and the agency of their constituent parts. There is also no reduction, i.e., the role of individuals is not reduced to being the representatives of large groups or exponents of their interests and aspirations. The political agencies of large groups, political organisations or individuals defined, determined and simultaneously limited one another. Ultimately, the agency of large groups determined the limits of the agency of the constituent elements of such groups, i.e., so-called "secondary actors" (Karwat, 1980, pp. 278–281).

In Mirosław Karwat's concept, only large groups had the real possibility and ability to act, including to choose their goals and actions. Groups without such potential were not actors, although they were objects of politics. This meant that only the possession of sovereignty, the ability to make reasonable choices and the possibility of exerting influence on others constituted political agency. And this

agency was a multifaceted and complex property of only certain social actors (Karwat, 1989b, pp. 64–65). It was shaped by the conditions in which it occurred and influenced by the relations existing between the objective possibilities of acting and such subjective abilities as motivation, skills, knowledge, consistency, etc. It was the property of only those groups that leave a permanent, i.e., objectivising, trace in politics and determine the content of political relations (Karwat, 1989b, p. 70). Thus, agency was associated with not only the consequences of actions, but also the motivations for participation in politics.

In the concept under discussion, being a specifically human property, agency first was a quality of groups after several conditions had been met. Some of them resulted from the assumptions concerning agency, while others were the consequences of the emergence of a special awareness in the social classes and their present orientation towards action. All translated into expectations aimed at political actors. The agency of groups was variable, gradable over time and dependent on the stages of their development. It was changing, progressing and regressing under the influence of the development or stagnation of groups. This approach made it possible to distinguish several degrees of agency analysis. They constituted a comparative scale showing differences in the agency of individual groups. Karwat adopted three fundamental criteria as the basis for this systematisation. The first criterion was the degree of mutual sovereignty of action, measured by the ability to take independent action, in one's own interests. The second one was the degree of "political strength", i.e., the ability to achieve established objectives. The third one was the degree of society-wide significance of action. According to these criteria, the lowest elementary degree of agency was assigned to groups that acted as actors of political action. Such groups had not yet been self-determined, took sporadic action and did not exert influence on other groups and society at large. A higher degree of agency was assigned to groups that had already become subjects of political relations. However, the activity of such groups remained marginal with respect to political life, although they were already self-determining, participating in the shaping of political relations and defining their place in such relations. When groups were able to inspire and impose changes in political relations on other actors, they had already become subjects of political processes. Another higher level of agency appeared when groups pursued their long-term interests and consequently were becoming subjects of political power. The last level of agency of the groups was already characterised by a high level of consciousness, confirmed by means of the struggle undertaken to remodel society. What was typical of such groups was historical initiative; as the subjects of freedom and progress, they were assigned the name of actors of the historical process (Karwat, 1989a, pp. 291–299).

Treating agency as a gradable and comparable quality made it possible to show the diverse role of groups in political processes. Among collective actors, the greatest importance was given to the classes, which, being the ultimate actors,

could establish goals and criteria for evaluating political action. Direct actors or performers of political action, including individuals, came from the classes. Individuals were able to pursue their interests and aspirations within the most important part of the structure, i.e., the classes. Recognising the classes as primary actors determined the material and reproductive character of politics. It was an attempt to build ideal order by the classes and according to their interests. The classes exerted cultural influence on society, including through political institutions. Therefore, primary actors were determined by their size; only large groups were able to effectively interact with other objects (Karwat, 1989b, p. 67). The agency of the classes itself was gradable. Some classes (the working class) could be and were the agents of state power, whereas others were never able to achieve this level of agency. The gradeability of the agency of collective actors resulted from their role, power, and political influence they wielded. It also resulted from their belonging to different levels of social organisation and the degree of group integration (Karwat, 1989b, pp. 65–68). Groups that were not classes were regarded as “not self-contained”. This included social movements and organisations. They were ancillary to the classes and were meant to pursue society-wide goals, serving the interests and welfare of society as a whole, as defined by the classes.

Political agency was considered one of the most important categories for the practical application of Marxist theory of society and politics (Karwat, 1982, p. 3). This resulted partly from an optimistic assumption about the possibilities for political actors, especially large social groups, to shape reality consciously and actively. “It is characteristic of Marxism to perceive the political agency of large social groups in terms of class struggle as the essential socio-historical framework of this agency, and the political agency of social classes as the most essential and decisive agency *vis-à-vis* the agency of social groups as a whole” (Karwat, 1980, p. 281). The consequence of this was the recognition of classes as a causal factor in history. The granting of political agency emphasised the importance of collective actors, properly determined the actions of some of them and influenced the limitation of their disintegration. It was assumed that collective actors were more likely to advance their interests by “subordinating” and directing the actions of individuals. It was emphasised that collective actors act through political organisations. At the same time, groups became actors when they had formed connections, supralocal bonds, a sense of separateness and belonging; when individuals identified themselves with wholes having a relatively unified awareness of their own position (Bodnar, 1988a, p. 66).

Besides large social groups, there were other collective actors and individuals. The latter were non-autonomous, secondary actors *vis-à-vis* collective actors (Karwat, 2018, p. 153). Becoming secondary actors depended on such conditions as having the ability to explain political problems, the skill to assimilate the necessary forms of activity, as well as the desire to participate in politics and

influence public affairs (Bodnar, 1984, pp. 147–149). Individuals were also regarded as direct actors ancillary to collective actors. Their direct character was a result of genuine possibilities to realise and value interests, opportunities to act and influence the processes and activities of political institutions. Individuals could become actors after acquiring the proper consciousness of their own needs and interests. Such individuals determined the regularities governing the political and political agency (Karwat, 1989a). Individual actors were supposed to have the necessary orientation in politics, including the knowledge of opportunities to participate in politics. The activity of individuals being political actors was gradable and depended on factual participation in politics. It linked to the significance of specific political roles fulfilled by individuals. As political actors, individuals had to become aware of the relationship occurring between their own needs, interests and aspirations and the state of society's needs and potential to meet them. This required familiarity with the conditions and rules of the political game, the achievement of the anticipated intensity of political activity and its effective utilisation (Karwat, Malinowski, 1982, p. 17). Individuals' actions had a meaningful supra-individual dimension that determined their political value, which did not always turn out to be a direct value to the individuals themselves.

The level of individuals' participation in politics was measured by the scope of undertaken activity and its range, i.e., the number of objects that a given actor was able to exert their influence on. Scope was understood as the quantity and quality of a given actor's resources. Ordinary members of society with negligible influence constituted the first level. The subsequent levels comprised citizens belonging to social organisations, citizens being members of political organisations and political activists, respectively. They were followed by socio-political activists, and political leaders constituted the last possible level of activity. It was claimed that viewing individuals through the prism of Marx's theory of society did not consist in disregarding their role in undertaken action, there was no escaping the fact that individuals' agency in politics was determined and influenced by the character of large groups' needs and interests. Besides individuals, small groups, teams, and individuals acting alone or on behalf of such organisations were regarded as secondary actors (Bodnar, 1988a, p. 69).

Changes in the definition of political actor and political agency

According to 21st-century findings, a political actor was any actor that independently defined the goals of their action, gave it a certain meaning, was aware of their needs and interests, made their own choices and decided to participate in collective action (Karwat, Ziółkowski, 2013, p. 229). An actor could be anyone (group or individual) who exerted political influence and was "able

to co-determine their own place in the social hierarchy, in the distribution of wealth, in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities on a society-wide scale, as well as to push for systemic solutions and specific pragmatic decisions in accordance with their own interests and views” (Karwat, Ziółkowski, 2013, p. 232). This meant a reduction in the importance of the distinction between the primary actor and the secondary actor, although many political scientists continued to emphasise their existence in another form. This translated into searching for new boundaries for actors, attributing agency to all groups, offering greater openness to individuals and recognising the latter as autonomous, self-creative and spontaneous actors.

The democratic transformation in Poland after 1989 translated into a change in what was expected of individuals, making them rightful participants in politics. The appreciation of individuals was due to numerous reasons. Two of them were a kinder view of the position of methodological individualism (see: Szmalka, 1976; Pierzchalski, 2009) and the absolute domination of neoliberal ideology in Poland. There was also a decline in the importance of Marxist ideology. Tools based on orthodox Marxist methodology for describing and analysing late 20th-century societies proved to be insufficient and exclusive reliance on Marxist methodology led to flawed analyses and, thus, wrong results. As a result of changes in how societies were organised, there was a move away from perceiving structure in terms of classes and the emergence of new collective actors. Nevertheless, the appreciation of individuals did not translate into giving them the dominant and most important tasks in politics, i.e., into recognising them as primary political actors. It turned out that accepting the idea that individuals are the real and sole political actor did not stand up to criticism, either. Therefore, there was a move towards pluralism of actors and treating them as equals, which also resulted from the noted reluctance of researchers to accept the concept of actor in an exclusively collective or individual form.

This approach oriented towards reconstructing the concept of agency led to the emergence of its different perceptions. Works published in that period tended to focus on changes in the relationship between agency and political actors. Political agency itself was defined by emphasising its occurrence on two basic planes. The cognitive plane concerned the possibility of becoming aware of one’s own needs and the ability to meet them. It provided for a relative distance from cognitive objects, from the process of cognition itself, as well as from oneself. The other plane was practical in character. It signified the existence of causal power or the enduring ability of political actors to shape and transform their relationships (Karwat, 2007, pp. 294–295). The variety of answers to the questions posed when analysing the aforementioned planes began to shape catalogues of proposals for answers to the question of what political agency ultimately is. It manifested itself in recognising new features and conditions that create agency.

Andrzej Czajowski's concept of political agency

Andrzej Czajowski proposed a different concept of political agency in the 21st century. It was a part of a presented model of the decision-making process in politics that aimed to explain the constitutive phenomena of this process (Czajowski, 2013, p. 7). In the decision-making process, a person or social group could act simultaneously (1) as a subject of a need, (2) a subject of interests, (3) a subject of a decision and (4) a subject of action. It could also appear in one, two or three roles. If someone was only a subject of needs, they were not a political actor. According to Czajowski, a political actor (or an actor of politics) is "every human being and social group whose ability to take political action has been granted by law or that takes such action regardless of whether it is legally entitled to do it" (2013, s. 143). Subsequently, he changed this premise and asserted that, since every human being is a legal entity from birth to death, every human being is also a political actor from birth to death. Consequently, he recognised entities participating in decision-making processes in the role of subjects of needs also as political actors. Being a legal entity, a person obtained capacity to perform acts in law under applicable legislation. A political actor's obtaining capacity for political action was conditioned by various circumstances. Furthermore, not every political actor with capacity for political action was a participant in politics (Czajowski, 2015, pp. 54–56).

As a result, Czajowski presented a gradation of current and potential participants in politics, regardless of how conscious and permanent their participation was. He also developed a system of their classification. Following this line of thinking, the category of political actors comprised individuals, groups, social organisations as well as their collective and single-member bodies. Actors involved in politics differed with respect to action they took and their ability to choose the type of their action. They could take political action, quasi-political action and peripolitical action (Czajowski, 2013, pp. 41–69; 2015, p. 55).

Czajowski's critical stance towards the understanding of political agency as a permanent or relatively permanent capacity of a group, organisation or individual for political action resulted from the fact that, among the participants in political life, there were both those who possessed such permanence and those who did not. "There are also ad-hoc participants in political life, active for a short time or seasonally, disappearing for a while, then reappearing" (Czajowski, 2013, p. 143). Furthermore, not all actors' actions were conscious, sovereign, reasonable or planned. On the other hand, refraining from political action, for example from participating in a referendum or an election, should also be regarded as some form of participation, provided it resulted from a conscious decision. Capacity for political action derives from both the powers granted to individuals and organisations under law and the personal predispositions of individuals.

Andrzej Czajowski's approach challenged the assumption of the existence of political actors as exclusively possessing permanent capacity for ideologically anchored, sovereign, reasonable and causal action. According to him, viewing political agency as a value that is won, acquired or voluntarily granted on a top-down basis results in depriving some segments of society of the attribute of political agency (Czajowski, 2013, p. 142).

Other forms of political agency – expressive agency

Expressive agency was an example of another type of political agency. Distinguished already in the 21st century by Mirosław Karwat, it was to be a characteristic feature of creators of culture, artists, authorities, opinion leaders, thinkers and the intelligentsia seeking to influence political behaviour. It was a relatively permanent capacity leading to sovereign and rational actions that met the needs of acting and represented collectives. It was to be based on a mechanism dominated by expressiveness rather than causal power. What Karwat emphasised as an important element of this agency, was the need to be a man of action, which meant that all those who had this agency and used it could effectively transform relations, create material facts, and stimulate social atmosphere and trends at historical moments important for society at large. This kind of agency highlighted the existence of cognitive traits in individuals and the pursuit of self-development combined with the persuasiveness of argumentation, which constituted a positive social influence. It meant that individuals were not only interested in the realisation of their aspirations, but also oriented toward serving the collective by ensuring the occurrence of necessary changes or the consolidation of social order.

Expressive agency existed side by side with cognitive and practical agency. It indicated the capacity for accurate self-expression and the ability to present arguments and exert influence on society by means of beliefs, ideas, emotions, and actions. According to Karwat, "expressive agency is the ability to articulate and jointly shape a way of perceiving and experiencing historical events and changes characteristic of a given community" (2007, p. 304). It was always supposed to occur, regardless of historical time or the social importance of the groups to which it was attributed. Those entitled to it put forward specific demands, defined new challenges facing society and influenced public expectations, moods, and opinions. They formed political orientations and influenced political decisions (Karwat, 2007, pp. 285–313). It should be emphasised that Karwat's concept of expressive agency is a certain transgression from this author's earlier approach to agency, presented in terms of causal power.

Summary

In political science, both categories under discussion concern man's relationship with political reality. The article shows how deliberations on these categories started from highlighting the significance of collective agency focused on social classes and then moved on to notice other actors and eventually recognise the role and significance of individuals as political actors. The very arrangement of relations between the agency of groups and the agency of individuals was to translate into the shape of social relations and form the basis for the political sphere, i.e., the organisation of societies. Created by political theorists, the concepts of political actor and political agency expanded the catalogue of theoretical tools that can be used by not only researchers in the discipline of political science. In the field of political science, they played the most significant role; one could even say that they influenced the formation of the identity of many political scientists. They influenced the transformation of the defining of politics and served to improve the explanation and understanding of politics. For many years, they constituted the basis for theoretical considerations and the development of detailed, often alternative, images of politics and the relationship between society and politics.

The category of political agency was politically useful. It answered not only the question of what it is for groups and individuals to be political actors (Karwat, 1989a, p. 156), but also whether the ability to act is characteristic of groups, political organisations or individuals, and thus, who is actually the sovereign or political actor, and how the objectivisation of the actor's actions occurs. Furthermore, "when asking about the status of political agency, about who is the carrier of agency in politics or who is the political actor, we ask not about the direct performers or executors of actions and not even about their direct inspirers or principals, but about the political content of such actions" (Karwat, 1989b, p. 73). The occurrence of political agency was considered a necessary component of and condition for the emergence of social agency in general (Karwat, Malinowski, 1982, p. 11).

The relationship of both categories to political practice did influence their shape; the Polish experience of change, the transformation of social order, influenced their transformation, theoretical expansion, and enrichment. The aforementioned experiences were linked to individuals' regaining their agency, gaining influence over their environment, becoming independent in goal setting and having a more real impact on their surroundings. Therefore, both categories were changing, adapting to the newly proclaimed political justifications aimed at motivating people to take action. They also created justifications for answering the question about the most effective forms of social activation.

The above remarks do not change the assessment that both categories were normative orientations, which, years later, was often considered their burden.

Their ideological anchoring resulted also from the construction of a network of relations with the political sphere and the occurring political practices. Their normative character was confirmed by the use of such terms as involvement, participation or activity. Nevertheless, it seems that such anchoring was their advantage as it made them interesting to political scientists and the political world alike. Their axiological marking shaped not only political discourse and political practice, but also scientific and theoretical discourse.

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