

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274073884>

# POLITICAL CULTURE

Chapter · January 2013

---

CITATION

1

READS

38,397

1 author:



[Brendon Swedlow](#)

Northern Illinois University

37 PUBLICATIONS 448 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Four power structures and cultures in social and political networks [View project](#)

(i.e., the Jews, against whom he expressed a clear anti-Semitism), to build a “national state” with a single language and religion. Zygmunt Balicki (1858–1916) had similar ideas.

With the rise of communism after World War II, political theory was forced into a frame of an internal debate within Marxism. In the early years, Adam Schaff (1913–2006) was an important figure; after an initial membership of Stalinist orthodoxy, he gradually assumed a more open position and ended up becoming one of the leading representatives of humanistic Marxism. He was gradually embracing the positions of Leszek Kołakowski (1927–2009) known for so-called “Marxist revisionism,” stressing the importance of the moral judgment of the individual, which cannot be justified by historical necessity.

Socialist and Marxist ideas also were found in the writing of Ludwik Krzywicki (1859–1941), who proposed the idea of “historical substrate,” which stresses the strength of the institutions, beliefs, anthropological characteristics, and human “psychic races” in changing the general law of the historical process indicated by Marxism. Another of his conceptions is the theory of “migration of ideas,” according to which ideas can “migrate” (even in later times) from the country where they originated to other countries that because of their less developed social conditions are incapable of expressing these ideas autonomously.

The so-called “non-Marxist historical materialism” of Leszek Nowak (1943–2009) is the attempt to use an idealizing method to extend the dichotomy of capitalist/proletariat also to the dynamics of politics and culture, through oppositions of rulers/subjects and priests/believers. Another significant contribution is that of Jadwiga Staniszkis (1942), who criticized the myth of *Solidarność* and the theory of socialism and postcommunism as well as, more recently, the phenomenon of globalization.

The end of communism saw the rejection of Marxist political theories and a great opening toward the importation of Western thought, especially what was until then held on the fringes: neoliberalism, American neoconservatism, and the influences of Karl Popper and his ideas about open society. These Western strains of thought were often combined with indigenous traditions, such as neo-monarchist ideas. Among the most significant and young representatives of these trends are Marcin Król (b. 1944),

Paweł Śpiewak (b. 1951), Jacek Bartyzel (b. 1956), Robert Gwiżdowski (b. 1960), and Marek Cichoński (b. 1966).

*Francesco Coniglione*

*See also* Communism, Varieties of; Eighteenth-Century Political Thought; Globalization; Marx, Karl; Neoconservatism; Neoliberalism; Nineteenth-Century Political Thought; Popper, Karl; Republicanism; Revolution; Socialism; Twentieth-Century Political Thought

#### Further Readings

- Bernacki, W. 2011. *Mysł Polityczna I Rzeczpospolitej*. Kraków, Poland: Arcana.
- Janowski, M. 2004. *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*. Budapest-New York: CEU Press.
- Kucharczyk, G. 2009. *Polska Mysł Polityczna Po Roku 1939*. Dębogóra, Poland: Dębogóra Wydawnictwo.
- Ludwikowski, R. 1982. *Main Currents of Polish Political Thought 1815–1890*. Warszawa, Poland: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Walicki, A. 1994. *Philosophy and National Romanticism: The Case of Poland*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

---

## POLITICAL CULTURE

---

If politics poses the question of “who gets what, when, where, and how,” then political culture supplies a big part of the answer. If politics is the “art of the possible,” then political culture helps define the limits of that art, for culture defines what is generally permissible in a given society.

At its core, political culture—the shared values and beliefs of a group or society regarding political relationships and public policy—answers the question of how human beings are going to live together. That is, political culture answers the question of who gets to do what with and to whom under what circumstances. Political culture also answers the question of who decides, who has authority, and who has power in a group, organization, institution, or other social unit in society. In answering this latter set of questions, political culture also supplies much of the answer to the two prior questions about “who gets . . . ?” and “what is possible?” When elements of popular culture, high culture, and/or the culture

studied by anthropologists are seen to impinge on or be entailed in political culture, then, arguably, they become part of the answer to these questions as well.

It is the political socialization process that produces and reproduces cultural attitudes about power, legitimacy, authority, and public policy. This process, by which political values and beliefs are instilled in citizens, is controlled and shaped by such interrelated authorities as parents, teachers and boards of education, clergy, business owners and media programmers, and public officials. These agents of political socialization determine what political themes will prevail in the consciousness of citizens regarding the proper purpose of government, the role of ordinary citizens in the political process, the kinds of people who should be entrusted with decision-making authority, the political limits and possibilities of human nature, and the ways in which government should or should not be involved in economics, education, religion, and the family. In general, the prevailing political culture tends to help perpetuate the existing structure of power, but under certain circumstances, the opposite may be true. Political change, including revolution, is invariably preceded by a weakening or challenging of the existing political culture. And political culture can itself be a source of change when we conceive of countries and organizations as being composed of contending political subcultures.

Political culture has been and remains an important concept for many political scientists, and it will probably always be so. Aristotle, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Alexis de Tocqueville, and other great students of politics sought to understand and explain political culture even when they did not use the term. Political scientists who have made political culture central to their research programs include Gabriel Almond, Harry Eckstein, Daniel Elazar, Ronald Inglehart, Robert Putnam, Sidney Verba, and Aaron Wildavsky. Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963) and Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone* (2000) are modern classics of political-cultural studies, and Elazar's *The American Mosaic* (1994) should become one.

In political-cultural studies, it has been common to focus on identifying the political attitudes, values, beliefs, and ideologies that are associated with and help explain the behaviors of certain individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions, and to study how the latter in turn contribute to the development of the former. Indeed, the complex, dynamic,

and reciprocal relationships between psychological and cultural variables, on the one hand, and group and institutional variables, on the other, belie any simple or linear explanation of political cause and effect. Nonetheless, in many studies, political cultures are often characterized in nominal terms, so that analysts speak of the culture of countries, states, agencies, corporations, groups, and peoples.

Political scientists also frequently find it helpful to develop typologies of political culture and theories that help explain political-cultural similarities and differences in what would otherwise appear to be an incomparable, cacophonous array of entities and individuals. For example, Ronald Inglehart (1990) distinguishes materialistic from postmaterialistic political cultures; Daniel Elazar (1994) identifies individualistic, moralistic, and traditionalistic political cultures; and Aaron Wildavsky (Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990; Wildavsky 1998, 2006) analyzes individualistic, egalitarian, hierarchical, and fatalistic political cultures.

The theories and types of political culture developed by these political scientists have stimulated a great deal of additional scholarly inquiry into political culture itself and into the related topics of political socialization, political psychology, and political economy.

*Brendon Swedlow*

*See also* Civil Society; Conservatism; Democratic Theory; Liberalism; Montesquieu, Baron de; Political Science and Political Thought; Political Sociology; Psychoanalysis and Political Thought; Tocqueville, Alexis de; Twentieth-Century Political Thought

#### Further Readings

- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Elazar, Daniel J. 1994. *The American Mosaic: The Impact of Space, Time and Culture on American Politics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kroeber, A. L., and Clyde Kluckholm. 1952. *Culture: A Critical Review of Conceptions and Definitions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Putnam, Robert A. (with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti). 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic*

- Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Swedlow, Brendon. 2011. “Editor’s Introduction: Cultural Theory’s Contributions to Political Science.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44 (4): 703–10.
- Thompson, Michael, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky. 1990. *Cultural Theory*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1998. *Culture and Social Theory*. Edited by Sun-Ki Chai and Brendon Swedlow. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- . 2006. *Cultural Analysis: Politics, Public Law, & Administration*. Edited by Brendon Swedlow. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

---

## POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

---

Political philosophy is parasitic upon political practice. The two, not identical, must be taken together. The most systematic of ancient philosophers characterized politics (knowledge of right conduct) as “the master science” (Aristotle, *Politics*). Such *in esse* is political philosophy, to which issues of public policy are central.

### Sense

Political philosophy is given various names but has four key aspects:

1. sustained reflection on sociopolitical policy and organization;
2. emphasis on propositions of a general or universal type, and only particular where instantiating general or universal claims;
3. subordinate concern with descriptive or analytical generals and universals; and
4. predominant concern, not always express, with identifying the right and the good.

The fourth aspect (the evaluative, prescriptive, normative, ethical) is the subject’s cutting edge. Dazzling teeth, however, devoid of gums and bone, don’t bite. The saw of evaluation, prized from the haft of relevant facts and (especially) logic, cannot cut.

Propositions may be reduced to four basic types:

1. evaluative,
2. analytical,
3. empirical, and
4. aesthetic.

Various words pointing in slightly different directions are used to refer to these four types, but this entry does not address these variations. Basic disciplines can be classified, in part, with regard to the signal type of proposition each privileges. Leaving aesthetics aside, the cutting edge of political philosophy is evaluative (prescriptive, normative); that of physics is empirical (factual, descriptive); and that of mathematics is analytical (formal, logical).

While this classification of propositions helps to locate points of disciplinary divergence, “divergence” does not equal “mutual exclusion.” In the widely used expression *normative political philosophy*, the adjective, *normative*, implies only that political philosophy is distinctively evaluative, not that evaluation operates alone, on its own.

A political philosophy that is reasonably ambitious will be driven by an ethic, but bound up with an epistemology (“logic of discovery”) and an ontology (understanding of being, or the world). The questions regarding right action in the world—logical procedures for apprehending the world, together with some grasp of the world as it is—are all tightly intertwined.

### Values, Facts, and Logic

Given that evaluation, description, and analysis are all caught up in political philosophy, three matching considerations apply. First, political philosophy, with its normative edge, is not independent of facts and logic, but combines the three types of proposition such that priority is accorded to norms. Second, physics and other descriptive studies again combine with evaluation and analysis, priority in this case being accorded to facts. Third, mathematics and similar computational (formal) disciplines recur to the same triad, analysis here forming its apex.

All spheres of understanding are to be presumed fundamentally connected, each new discipline branching from a single tree. The pervasive triadic distinction between norms, logic, and facts may not be read off as promoting empirical, to the exclusion of normative,