FOREWORD

In Praise of the "Ordinary"

Ken Jowitt

The "Real" Poland

Adam Michnik is a partisan. He claims to be uncomfortable with the role of politician, but he does precisely what the "politician . . . must always and necessarily do, namely, fight." And he has the three "preeminent qualities" of a politician: "passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion." Nor can there be any doubt about Michnik's "knowledge of the tragedy with which all action, but especially political action, is truly interwoven."[1] As he says, "We live in a world of immutable dilemmas" (Chapter 19).

But what is the fight for? To define and defend the "real" Poland, which means creating a Polish civic idiom and set of civic practices and institutions. Michnik has a deep antipathy for what I call "castle politics," with its combatants, not participants, separated categorically behind ethnic moats and ideological or religious drawbridges. He recognizes that several castle constructions of the "real" Poland exist: nationalist,

1. A remarkable affinity exists between Weber's conception and Michnik's embodiment of political life. See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* translated, edited, and with an introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Galaxy, 1958), 77–129. Quoted passages are from Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 95, 115, 117.

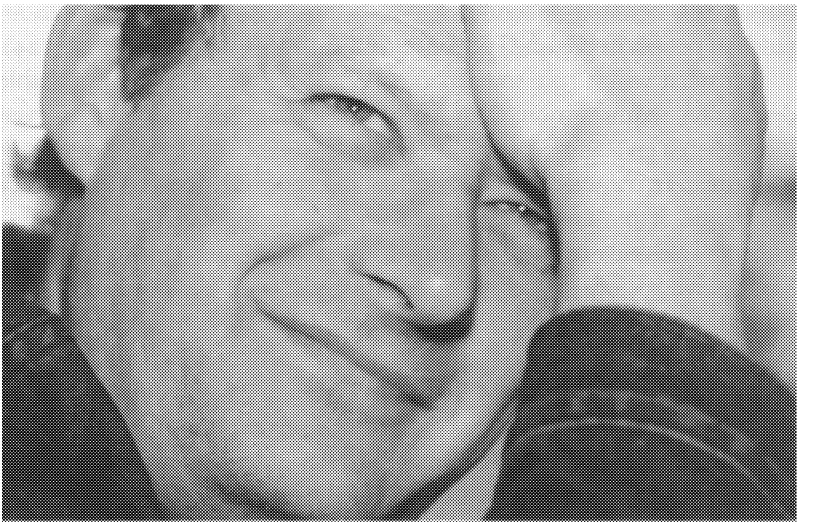
Catholic, and Communist. He does not want to eliminate their occupants; he wants them to leave their privileged "castles" and share a "city."

For Michnik, the "real" Poland's contemporary genealogy begins with the Workers' Defense Committee, or KOR, a model "founded on the search for compromise . . . reject[ing] the revolutionary rhetoric of all or nothing." KOR was "a certain model of political reflection within a totalitarian system, a certain model of civil courage and the edification of independent institutions in a civil society" (Chapter 3). Its world-historical offspring was Solidarity. Solidarity's offspring is *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Michnik's genealogy of the "real" Poland begins with KOR, the "father," followed by Solidarity, the "son," and their "spirit," *Gazeta*.

If the nation-state is a partially conflictual amalgam of state, civic, and ethnic components, Michnik fights to ensure the primacy, not the exclusivity, of the civic. This comes out clearly in his conversation with General Wojciech Jaruzelski, whose stated concern is with Polish sovereignty and the contribution martial law made.[2] It would be very easy to dismiss Jaruzelski's claim, and it would be a mistake. Michnik knows that liberty and sovereignty are related, not mutually exclusive. He also knows that they are not identical—certainly not during martial law, which "only broadened the scope of your [Jaruzelski's] sovereignty as head of state, but dealt a crushing blow to the autonomy of the rest of society" (Chapter 23). For Michnik, civic liberty takes pride of place over state sovereignty and ethnic identity. So, as a proud Pole, he can say, "If Poland were a superpower, I would probably be . . . a gypsy," and believe that "our national interest will best be served if we become part of the world around us rather than some kind of godforsaken Slav enclave in the middle of Europe" (Chapters 3 and 24).

Michnik's fight for civic Poland, a Poland where state and ethnic dimensions are just that—dimensions, realized in the context of and relativized by the reality and centrality of a civic polity—is a fight against autarchic political, social, ideological, religious, and national fortresses animated by feelings of revenge, hatred, and "encoded animosities." Gesticulate fundamentalisms—religious, ethnic, and national—are to be fought and defeated by articulate publics. And the focal point of Polish civic heroism is *Gazeta Wyborcza*. *Gazeta*'s purpose is to overcome the

2. See Chapter 23. The same defense of Communist rule as having successfully preserved, prevented the diminution, or even enlarged Poland's "sovereignty" in the context of superior Soviet power is also asserted by several older members of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP). See, for example, Jakub Berman's comments in Teresa Torańska's "*Them*" (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 300.



Adam Michnik, September 1993. (Photo: Jerzy Gumowski)

weakness and formlessness that characterize so much of Polish life in the aftermath of the Leninist extinction. Michnik directs his efforts against an amoral urbanism, personalism, and egoism; against what Karl Mannheim described as "an inconstant, fluctuating public [that] can be reassembled only through new sensations."[3] His fight is against the "ghetto" mentality produced under Leninist rule; against rumor and dissimulation as modal *mis*representations of the population's public, or better, visible self.[4] As an intellectual, citizen, editor, historian, and politician, Michnik wants to "name things by their proper names, to articulate conflicts as conflicts" (Chapter 5). How remarkably old-fashioned this seems. How "enlightened," pre-postmodern, *tolerant*. How wonderful!

If in the early "eighteenth century the rulers of Saxony issued decrees prohibiting untruthful newspaper writings," declaring that they did not want "reasoners for subjects,"[5] *Gazeta*'s raison d'être is precisely to create reasoning and reasonable citizens. Michnik does not "know who would defend democracy if it were endangered." He does know, "however, who

3. Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1940), 97.

4. On the culture of dissimulation, see my chapters on "Political Culture," "Neotraditionalism," and "The Leninist Legacy" in my book *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

5. Quoted in Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 388.

buys which newspapers [and that] for various reasons, hundreds of thousands of people in [Poland] prefer to read *Gazeta Wyborcza*" (Chapter 24).

But what will it take to sustain and enhance this civic reality? Stable democracy requires more than Michnik's courage and inspiration; even more than a civic institution like *Gazeta Wyborcza* and its attentive reading public. In contrast to mimic or facade democracy, genuine democracy has depth. It requires *three constitutions*—political, social, and moral—united by a culture of individualism. Individualism, not egoism. Not Karl Marx's civil society of "self-sufficient monads" and "Robinsinoids"; not Edward C. Banfield's "Montegrano," populated by egos absolutely obsessed with their self-interest, unrestrained by anything other than external obstacle, internal disability, or plain bad luck.[6] Rather, democracy requires that most extraordinary of cultural inventions, the individual, informed by conscience, aware of his and her independent (not derived) value and complementary (not categorical) identities.

As much as anything, Michnik's essays reveal a powerful and fallible individual painfully and continuously shaping, not deriving, his identity; asserting it, protecting it, fighting over and with it, valuing it, enjoying it. Michnik may be right to argue that the Polish Catholic Church "needs people who, like Erasmus of Rotterdam and unlike Luther, will stay in the Church" and protect it against the danger of fundamentalism (Chapter 24). Civic polities do need reasonable men like Erasmus to sustain them. As Johan Huizinga said, "In so far as people still believe in the ideal that moral education and general tolerance may make humanity happier, humanity owes much to Erasmus." But Huizinga also noted that "Erasmus is the man who is too sensible and moderate for the heroic."[7] There is a great deal of Erasmus in the editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza,* and fortunately, even more of Luther.

A Polish Luther

In the second and most fervent essay in this volume, Michnik examines Thomas Mann's exile and approvingly quotes six

6. Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader,* edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 40; and Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958).

7. Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 192, 188.

ideas of "this Don Quixote of the Nazi era." Among them is this: "Be one's own signpost when there are no other signposts" (Chapter 2). Michnik's individualism is his signature. "Poles," he says, "have the bad habit of justifying themselves for other people's sins. I am a revisionist, and responsible only for my own mistakes" (Chapter 3). At the core of his being Michnik is "protestant." His individualism does not exhaust his identity; or better, his individualism centers a multiplicity of identities. He is a Western individual. Listen: "I am not consistent when it comes to the order of values, knowing that conflictual values exist, but I am consistent when it comes to myself" (Chapter 3). Michnik worries about only one thing: "being right with myself. Everything else is God's affair" (Chapter 3). Sound familiar? "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures, or by clear reason, . . . I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience"—Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, 1521.[8]

Michnik's response to "Cauchon," to hierarchical and corporate authority, is the same as "Saint Joan's." Joan asserts: "My voices do not tell me to disobey the Church; but God must be served first." To which Shaw has Bishop Cauchon reply: "And you, and not the Church, are to be the judge?" Joan's reply: "What other judgment can I judge by but my own?"[9] Mieczysław Moczar did Adam Michnik a great service by attempting to impose a categorical identity on him: Jewish. A Communist Cauchon, Moczar identified himself in categorical, stereotypical, corporate terms—Communist and Polish—never in individual terms. But Michnik thought, "It wasn't up to Mieczysław Moczar . . . to decide whether I was Polish, Jewish, or Chinese. It was none of their business" (Chapter 3). In the same spirit of individualism, Michnik opposes collective guilt. Communists are not to be punished on ascriptive grounds "just because at one time or another they belonged to the Communist party." If they are punished, it will be as individuals in a court of law (Chapter 22).

Still, if Michnik's preferred identity as a civic individual is clear, he remains confused about its meaning in a Roman Catholic Polish culture. However, he knows where to search for the answer. "This is where I would look for the roots of the phenomenon that we are still unable to deal with intellectually, the phenomenon called Father Maksymilian Kolbe. We must find the courage to ask: Who really was Maksymilian

8. John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961), xxiii.

9. Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), 130.

Kolbe? He was undoubtedly a saint" (Chapter 24). Saint, yes; individual, no!

Father Kolbe gave his life in place of another prisoner in Auschwitz. Michnik applauds Jan Józef Szczepański's "splendid essay" about Kolbe, an essay in which Szczepański examines this "strange combination of heroism and sainthood and parochialism, primitivism, and venomous hatred cloaked in the authority of the Catholic Church" (Chapter 24). Kolbe's saintliness and anti-Semitism are, Michnik says, "somehow closely intertwined with each other." And he shares Szczepański's justified "unease" about Kolbe. What, he asks, "is the source of this syndrome"? The answer is, traditional Polish culture and, more generally, non-Western cultures, in which identities are categorical, stereotypical, corporate, all-encompassing; like Jehovah, jealous and "greedy."

Kolbe's sacrifice was ultimate and extraordinarily courageous. But what or whom did he sacrifice himself for? I wonder if, in fact, doubt, the person (in contrast to the soul) for whom Kolbe sacrificed himself mattered as much to him as the sacrificial act itself? Kolbe's political and religious identity was that of a person immersed in one "greedy institution,"[10] the Polish Catholic nation. He could and did act in a heroic manner worthy of a martyr. But he did so neither as an individual nor for an(other) individual. *There is no discrepancy between Kolbe's saintliness and ethnic chauvinism.* Kolbe's world was composed of invidiously ordered categories: Roman Catholic, Polish, Jewish, Communist. His categorical imperative was the group, not the individual. His personal sacrifice was genuine and genuinely symbolic.

Michnik recognizes the issue is not simply Father Kolbe; it is the relation of Roman Catholicism to moral, political, and economic individualism. I do not think Michnik wants to recognize how essentially opposed to individualism the Roman Catholic Church is. He refers to Stefan Kisielewski's alliance with Catholic circles "because [Catholicism] . . . was deeply rooted in the national consciousness [and was capable of] reconciling individualism with concern for the common good" (Chapter 4). However, Michnik must confront the meaning of the common good and community in Catholic Poland. In Witold Gombrowicz, the "secular humanist," he finds a kindred spirit. Gombrowicz understood that "communism was a system that subordinated the individual

10. The concept of a greedy institution does not refer to the ethics of an institution but to its absolute claim on a person's self. See Lewis Coser, *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment* (New York: Free Press, 1974). His chapter "The Militant Collective: Jesuits and Leninists" is of particular interest in this context.

to the collective" and that the "best way to fight communism [was] to strengthen the individual against the masses" (Chapter 4). He also recognized the corporate quality of Polish Catholicism, "the danger lurking in the stereotypical anti-communism of the Polish Catholic. Thus *he called on his fellow Poles to discover the individual.*"[11] In that same spirit, Michnik describes himself as a "friend of the Church," neither member nor enemy, a friendly critic. The Church, he says, "fascinates me, and I find much in it that appeals to me." But as his girlfriend, Basia, points out, "Having few real contacts with the Church [makes] it much easier for [him] to like it" (Chapter 3).

What, then, is the answer? Can individualism be reconciled with Polish Catholicism? Michnik offers us a strikingly practical instance of "reconciliation." And the example suggests, I think correctly, that the hope for Polish individualism lies more with the growing individualism of an increasing number of "protestant" Polish Catholics than with the Church as institution: "The Church says that Catholics aren't allowed to divorce or abort, but Catholics aren't looking to the Church for answers to those questions. You could see that clearly during Solidarnosc: the same people who hung crucifixes in union premises *only listened to their consciences and not to the bishops* when it came time to decide whether or not to strike" (Chapter 3; emphasis added).

To be sure, the Church is not and will not be reconciled to even a social "protestantization" of its place and meaning in Polish life. But to the extent that Michnik's particular observation about Polish workers in 1980 is more generally true, then despite the Church's desire to absolutize its identity and stereotype its members' identity, its role is being relativized and their identity individualized.

Michnik's rejection of categorical identities and the corporate entities that "correctly" define them is most evident in his attitude toward the Communist party. The ambivalence that surrounds his attitude toward the Church disappears when he addresses the party. The party has no saving "grace." Its mortal sins were privilege and paternalism. Communist Poland was "a state organized according to the same principles as a nursery school, with its small children and teachers." In contrast, democratic Poland will be a state "designed for adults" (Chapter 23). In a civil society "people do not want to be pupils . . . ; they act as citizens" (Chapter 5).

11. Chapter 4 (emphasis added). Another, highly significant "other" for Michnik, Czesław Miłosz, says in his interview that he also "is allergic to the Polish-Catholic combination." But it is not clear how he feels about individualism.

For all their genuine, character-defining differences, both *the* party and *the* Church make "greedy" identity demands. Members of each organization ideally derive their identity from an entity that conceives of itself as corporate, superior, and exclusive. Stefan Staszewski's characterization of the party is apt: "For the Party isn't simply the Party; it is a word which replaces all known concepts and expressions; it is an absolute. . . . It is always right [infallible]."[12] All corporate groups negate the individual (some the self as well). Tactics designed by persons within such groups to devise an autonomous private space for the self may succeed; but these are ad hoc sites of personal autonomy, not principled sites of individual independence. Michnik's response to the party's corporate paternalism is intellectual, political, *and* visceral. When asked what advice he would give to the Communist party, he quotes the Polish poet Julian Tuwim, "whose words are addressed to Communists in all lands: 'Kiss my arse' " (Chapter 5). His rejection of the party is—and I'm afraid he will have to accept my characterization—part of a highly *consistent* critique of corporate political ontologies; ways of life that deny the individual's centrality and justify imperious hierarchy with paternal ideas of "false consciousness," or, in the Church's case, "invincible ignorance." His quest is for a polity, culture, society, and psychology that *relativizes* such claims and the organizations that make them. In his view democratic thought has "no place for fundamentalism of any kind," including ethnic fundamentalism (Chapter 20).

Currently, in the West, liberal intellectuals are painfully contorted in their effort to simultaneously appreciate the individual and the "particularity" of ethnic membership. In contrast, I find Michnik's take on ethnicity refreshingly conservative (as he would say à la Burke, not de Maistre) and clear. I interpret his position to be this: respect ethnic solidarity/reject solidary ethnicity.

His intolerance of anti-Semitism speaks to this distinction. "Anti-Semitism has become a code and a common language for people who are dreaming of a nationally pure and politically disciplined state . . . without people who are 'different.' . . . What characterizes this kind of anti-Semitism is a strange fascination with blood and heredity, . . . in the racial backgrounds of grandfathers and great-grandfathers" (Chapter 18). Michnik abhors this greedy, categorical, corporate conception and organization of identity. He sees it as the basis of social fragmentation, mutual hate, and violence. In such a society the civic individual can only be

12. Torańska, "*Them,*" 135.

at risk, at risk of being no more than a jester, a quixotic figure whose individualism equally offends and challenges those with opposing nonbiodegradable identities, whether they be Polish, Catholic, Communist, or Jewish.

Michnik wants neither a Poland populated with Max Stirner's "egos"[13] stripped of political, ethnic, and religious loyalties nor a Poland of "children" subject to the paternal direction of "greedy" corporate institutions. He wants a Poland of civic institutions populated by individual citizens. If I may be forgiven a Stalinist mode of formulating a point, Michnik is saying implicitly that *either* individualism defines the meaning of group identities in a society *or* group identity defines the meaning of personal identity in a society. I am saying explicitly that in a civic polity group membership resembles a banquet more than a fortress.[14] Entry to, membership in, and exit from a liberal association emphasizes individual choice as much as group permission or certification and thereby limit the power of permission and certification. Similarly, in a liberal modern society the individual integrates the multiplicity of his or her partial and role-bound identities. This not only differs from but also opposes the organization of a traditional society made up of "greedy" corporate associations separating a person's multiple identities with categorical group barricades and imperatively coordinating them by means of an invidious status hierarchy. To create and sustain a civic, democratic, tolerant way of life, one must relativize absolute ethnic, religious, and ideological identities. Michnik knows one must choose to lose the solidary comfort (and intolerance) of a fortress identity if one is to gain the catholic solidarity that comes from choosing one's identit*ies.*[15] In this regard Michnik has a courage and insight that largely escape Ira Katznelson in his criticism of Michnik's alleged "failure" to "[incorporate] Jewish particularity into the Polish nation" and to adequately affirm his Jewishness.[16]

If, on the one hand, Katznelson defends liberalism (individualism) because "for all its infirmities and hypocrisies, liberalism . . . remains the

13. See Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 125–75, for a concise statement of Stirner's thought.

14. I take the metaphors "banquet" and "fortress" from Stalin. See "The Proletarian Class and the Proletarian Party," in *The Essential Stalin,* edited by Bruce Franklin (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1974), 43–46.

15. I am not happy with the idea of "choosing" one's identity. It suggests a level of ease in deciding about identity and a forgiving plasticity about the world, neither of which I accept. "Claiming identity" is both a more evocative and a more accurate formulation.

16. Ira Katznelson, *Liberalism's Crooked Circle: Letters to Adam Michnik* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 111, 110 fn. 16.

only great political tradition to affirm and contain moral and group pluralism," then, on the other, he criticizes it because "liberalism's universalism and individualism make it hard to find a place inside the doctrine for the recognition of groups, including cultural and national groups, as legitimate rights-bearing units of citizenship." After all, Katznelson says, "a decent liberalism does not repudiate difference."[17] True. However, a decent liberalism should not, in fact cannot, practically incorporate all difference to the same extent. Liberalism is a peculiar partisan statement. Reflecting its philosophical peculiarity, it must tolerate "differences" whose purpose is to destroy it. Reflecting its politically partisan nature, liberalism must ideologically reject and politically defend itself against certain "differences."

And what about ethnic differences? Michnik does not reject ethnicity per se. Rather, he prefers ethnic "lite"; the flourishing of multiple cultures *within* individuals, in place of and in opposition to the flourishing of multiple cultures behind categorical ethnic, religious, and political barricades.[18] He describes himself as a Pole of Jewish origin.[19] Michnik does not reject his Jewish family origins, or he would not have accepted the Shofar Award. Only if one accepts a primordial notion of ethnic and religious identity[20] can Michnik be accused of "so little affirmation of being a Jew."[21] Katznelson simply does not get it. "It" being that individual civic identities *do come at the expense of corporate identity.* They are essentially antagonistic identities: one, derived and "jealous"; the other, chosen and generous.

For those who operate with a "greedy" understanding of ethnicity and religiosity, individualism means assimilation, that is, loss of a previously corporate identity; and they are right. For the primordialist, ethnic

17. Ibid., 104, 135, 116.

18. I take the phrase "flourishing of multiple cultures within individuals" from David Hollinger, *Post-Ethnic America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 49, but in a spirit very different from the author who finds it exceptional that multiple cultures can not only flourish in a nation but "even [*sic*] within individual Americans." My point is that individualism provides a consistent site for the flourishing of multiple relativized cultures. My own Irish, English, Catholic, working-class cultures and my wife's Jewish, Protestant, middle-class cultures—all seem to be doing quite well precisely because they are multiple *and relative* parts of our individual American identity.

19. In a footnote, Katznelson quotes a statement of Michnik's, "by a Pole who has never hidden his Jewish origins" (*Liberalism's Crooked Circle,* 110 fn. 116).

20. Much like those who refer to "lapsed" or "nonpracticing" Catholics assume some ineradicably ascriptive quality to certain identities, some genetic impulse to resume one's "true" identity and character flaw in denying its "deep particularity."

21. Katznelson, *Liberalism's Crooked Circle,* 110.

lite isn't "real" ethnicity at all. In contrast and opposition, the individual experiences identity as a multiplicity of chosen, partial identities centered in the self, uncertified by categorical groups. Understood in this way, individualism simultaneously offers the only viable base for a civic polity and annoys, frightens, and angers the members and leaders of "greedy institutions."

In a sense the individual in contemporary Poland, and even more so in the other countries of the former Soviet empire, is a little like the character in John Le Carré's *A Small Town in Germany* "whose accent was neither wholly English nor wholly German, but a privately elected no man's land, picked and set between the two."[22] Such people presently operate in a fragile public space, with the memory of past corporate identities and the fear that as yet unnamed fortress identities will emerge with their greedy claims. Michnik's ethical, political, and individual vocation is to help recast the character of Polish identity, culture, and institutions to the point where the individual no longer lives in a "privately elected no man's land." Michnik wants a Poland where "citizens can meet and collaborate independently of their faith, nationality, or ideology"; a Poland of deep individualism, not deep cultural particularism (Postface).

However, civic individualism is not simply the sum of voting and associating. In Michnik's view, if democracy is to withstand challenge and occasional failure, individualism must have a moral constitution. By asserting and addressing the moral basis of individualism, Michnik criticizes and enriches the remarkably *stingy* discussion of democracy in Western academia—one that bears a remarkable resemblance in certain respects to Marx's definition of bourgeois civil society. The "stingy" view of democracy sees it as a collection of self-interested, instrumentally oriented, entrepreneurial politicians and selfish citizens mutually restrained by calculations about the positive utility of an electoral game that does not guarantee victory but offers the possibility of such, as well as the guarantee that the defeated can regularly challenge the victors. I recognize these features of polyarchy. And I insist that polyarchies with only these attributes are shallow, fragile, and *not* likely to develop into robust democracies. Electoral repetition will not produce civic democratic institutions. Institutionalization and addition are very different processes. In sharp contrast to the Western social scientists who believe that rational choices will magically transform egos into individuals, Michnik argues that only a sense of the moral and sacred can infuse democracy with

22. John Le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany* (New York: Dell, 1968), 6.

decency and courage. In situations in which it might be rational to run not fight, doubt not believe, punish not forgive, reject not accept or quit; in those situations morality and a sense of the sacred can be a source of courage, confidence, mercy, toleration, and endurance. Democracies with social and moral depth require Don Quixotes irrational enough to fight the odds. Which in turn raises one of life's "immutable dilemmas." Don Quixotes seek perfection, while Michnik has "always believed that a perfect society could be created only in a concentration camp" (Chapter 23).

The Moral Basis of a Democratic Society

Michnik's theory of democracy's origination and consolidation depends on "graceful," not merely rational, choices. In stark opposition to those who dismiss the idea of legitimacy, or believe that "those who make institutional changes pursue their own individual interests above all else and their interests center on furthering their own political careers,"[23] Michnik believes that "there are certain principles that we have to defend, regardless of the circumstances," even when (or especially when) our interests may seriously suffer (Chapter 24).

Listen to his location and explanation of KOR's origin: "It came out of a moral impulse. I remember attending a trial in 1976 that implicated some Ursus workers; I heard the condemnations, I saw the wives crying, and I shook with rage. I felt that it would be inadmissible to drop these people" (Chapter 3).

How (instrumentally) *ir*rational! And yet how firm a foundation moral beliefs (not abstract "values") provide new organizations, particularly when their members are surrounded by a hostile polity and society. In those circumstances, a necessary condition for success is that "those who shamelessly give priority to their interests [electoral or otherwise] without regard for moral considerations" not occupy leadership roles.[24] Michnik's appreciation of democracy's moral constitution is an invaluable complement to Joseph Schumpeter and others who address the

23. Barbara Geddes, "A Comparative Perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 28, no. 2 (July 1995): 239.

24. Thomas Mann, quoted by Adam Michnik, Chapter 2.

strictly political component, as well as to those few and valuable formulations of democracy's social constitution.[25]

In part, the moral constitution of democracy concerns language. As one of his "teachers," Czesław Miłosz, says in an interview with Michnik, "Words really do have a force. Words are a serious business" (Chapter 21). And Michnik's language often has a deliberately moral cast. "Solidarity was a confederation against evil . . . a moment of grace." However, more than words are involved. "If you are defending an idea, you first have to show, by your own behavior, that you believe in it; in other words, you have to bear witness" (Chapters 23 and 3). Point: while language counts, it does not create. It contributes to an ethos; it does not bring one about. The vulgar speech at Stalin's "court" did not create a regime of terror; it did contribute to its ethos. Nor are Michnik's references to mercy and grace, his admonitions against violence, hate, and revenge, sufficient bases for a democracy. They are symbolic parts of its moral constitution. The power of those symbols and language depends on their incorporation and expression in the graceful choices and actions of strategic actors who bear witness in nondemocratic and democratic settings—men like Andrei Sakharov, János Kis, and Václav Havel, who helped make the moral "word" *freedom* political "flesh." Moral courage substantiates moral language. Sakharov, "a great scholar, . . . named a Hero of Socialist Labor an unprecedented three times, . . . belonged to the most privileged class in Russia. And yet he rejected it all to become the defender of human rights . . . 'the conscience of Russia.' " What, Michnik asks, "gave those people the strength? . . . Why did a great physicist, a distinguished philosopher, a famous writer and essayist . . . sacrifice freedom, calm, and personal security for a seemingly hopeless battle . . . ? Not one of them ever declared himself to be a man of religious calling or a politician. And yet, embroiling themselves in politics, they bore moral witness" (Chapter 15). Perhaps they bore witness out of a moral impulse. Perhaps moral—and immoral—impulses are a first and necessary, though not sufficient, cause for creating institutions. If so, what forces and settings favor moral courage as an emergent property of particular individuals and groups?

25. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), Chaps. 31, 32; Ernest Barker, ed. and trans., *The Politics of Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), Bks. 2, 3, 4, 6; Harry Eckstein, *Division and Cohesion in Norway* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), Appendix B: A Theory of Stable Democracy.

Michnik identifies several. There are *institutions,* like the Roman Catholic Church, whose concern with truth, distinguishing good from evil, and belief that we are all children of God, precisely because they are moral convictions, not simply interests, carry with them not only the risk of dogmatism but also the promise of steadfast courageous defense. There are *experiences,* like jail, that underpin and increase one's moral courage (assuming, of course, one lands there in defense of principles, not illegal pursuit of interests). According to Michnik: "If I hadn't gone to jail, I might be a scoundrel like Mieczysław Rakowski or Jerzy Urban now. I thank God for my years in jail" (Chapter 3). And the longer one spends on Michnik's preferred path of living life in "truth and dignity," the greater the likelihood it will become "something truly addictive" (Chapter 2).

Inspiration—provided by those who have borne and bear witness—is a third source of moral courage and individualism. For Michnik they are his "teachers" Sakharov, Kis, Havel, Gombrowicz, Kołakowski, Miłosz, and Mann. People you want to emulate. People you do not want to disappoint. People whose recognition you seek.[26] People you form "sacred friendships" with in jail. People who share your "fatal addiction" to living life in truth and dignity.

Moral courage is ethical in an individual, political in a group of individuals. And as Max Weber notes in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* "In order that a manner of life . . . should come to dominate others, it had to originate somewhere, and not in isolated individuals alone, but as a way of life common to whole groups of men." Why? Because "the spirit of capitalism . . . had to fight its way to supremacy against a whole world of hostile forces."[27] And in his conversation with Jaruzelski, Michnik makes it very clear just how hostile Poland was in 1965 to the democratic actions he and his friends undertook: "To say there was social support at that time for people like me is simply a figment of our heroic mythology. We were considered deviants, madmen who were best kept at arms' length" (Chapter 23). Like sixteenth-century Protestants, opponents of Communist regimes were deviants who on the basis of their "sacred friendships," moral beliefs, and courage sus-

26. Michnik tells how he once went to Paris, leaving his colleagues to face the "Power" while he drank champagne. But he also "gave interviews [and] took part in demonstrations. . . . No one had dared to do such things before me. But I felt I had to act like a live torpedo, a kamikaze, to prove to Jacek Kuroń that I wasn't a deserter" (Chapter 3).

27. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 55–56.

tained each other in their irrational fight against the odds. And won! But that isn't the whole story.

The need for democracy and the need for the sacred make up one of life's immutable dilemmas. Except for extraordinary circumstances, democracy and the sacred are conflicting imperatives. Echoing Weber, Michnik believes that "politics and ethics belong to different worlds." Though fused in the struggle against Communist power—"the politics of those totalitarian regimes was, after all, an open attack on ourselves, on our freedom, on our dignity, on truth—" in normal circumstances an ethic of responsibility and one of ultimate ends have different rationales and implications, call for different skills and virtues.[28] To make this point, Michnik contrasts the conspirator and the politician: "One becomes a conspirator for completely different reasons than one becomes a politician. Becoming a conspirator involves a moral choice, it involves choosing one's fate, whereas becoming a politician involves choosing one's profession" (Chapter 24). And yet a viable democracy must have representatives of both ethics—those with a responsible concern for the consequences of their actions and those who feel " 'responsible' only for seeing to it that the flame of pure intentions is not quenched"[29]—and representatives of each ethic must accept the value, or at least the discipline, of tolerant terms and frameworks for their continuous mutual critique.

In Weber's view a civic polity's integrity depends on the possibility of combining an ethic of responsibility with an ethic of ultimate ends. In an unusually passionate passage he declares, "It is immensely moving when a mature man . . . is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: 'Here I stand, I can do no other.' That is something genuinely human and moving. . . . In so far as this is true, an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts, but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man—a man who can have the calling for politics."[30]

Let me trace some of the routes and risks Michnik takes in his effort to treat the ethics of responsibility and ultimate ends as supplements. Michnik's signature effort to meld an ethic that "takes account of pre-

28. See Chapter 3; and Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 119–28.
29. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 121.
30. Ibid., 127.

cisely the average deficiencies of people" and an ethic of ultimate ends that favors acts "that can and shall have only exemplary value" manifests itself in his uncompromising rejection of violence as a means to gain power.[31] "Whoever uses violence to gain power uses violence to maintain power. Whoever is taught to use violence cannot relinquish it. In our century, the struggle for freedom has been fixed on power, instead of the creation of civil society. It has therefore always ended up in the concentration camp" (Chapter 5). When Jaruzelski accuses Michnik of being "a tiger [that] was going to bite us," he replies: "Our intentions were bloodthirsty when it came to institutions but never when it came to people" (Chapter 23). Rejecting the idea that the Round Table had been a mistake, Michnik says, "I'm happy that I was able to contribute to a situation in which not a single drop of blood has been spilled during this transformation" (Chapter 23).

However, the same Michnik forthrightly states, "If the Russians ever occupied the country, they had to know that they'd be spitting blood" (Chapter 3). He tells General Jaruzelski: "If I had been in the vicinity of you, General Kiszczak, or Premier Rakowski on December 13—a moment of national upheaval—and if I'd been armed, I'm quite certain I would have taken aim" (Chapter 23). These are not the words of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount; nor even of Gandhi. Michnik is no pacifist. However, he is absolutely removed from Frantz Fanon, for whom "violence is a royal pardon, . . . the colonized man find[ing] freedom in and through violence."[32] For Michnik, shedding blood is the last resort, the adoption of an ethic of ultimate ends to defend one's individual and national dignity and avoid the "spiritual capitulation of the terrorized." Michnik en-courages "[spitting] out the gag of fear" (Chapter 6). Courage in defense of dignity and truth is *good*. "The 1980–81 events were a revolution for dignity, a celebration of the rights of the vertebrae, a permanent victory for the straightened spine" (Chapter 5). Violence to gain and maintain power is *evil*. Violence is the antithesis of a civic political order. "Violence fractures social bonds. And, whenever society is so atomized, its intrasocial networks shattered, it becomes vulnerable to totalitarianism," to a prepolitical and antipolitical organization of power.[33]

31. Ibid., 121.

32. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 67, 117.

33. See Chapter 5. The American political theorist Sheldon Wolin makes a very similar point in "Violence and the Western Political Tradition," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 33 (January 1963): 15–28.

The associated risk comes from Michnik's rather dogmatic and politically disarming, in certain circumstances, disabling, claim that violence has never added to the emergence or development of democracy. Risking a Rabelaisian response from Michnik, things are more complicated.[34] The American Revolution and Civil War were violent acts that made positive contributions to democracy. In this regard, Weber's appreciation of politics is more penetrating. He recognizes that "politics operates with very special means, namely, power backed up by violence. . . . Whoever wants to engage in politics at all, and especially in politics as a vocation, has to realize these ethical paradoxes. . . . [H]e lets himself in for the diabolic forces lurking in all violence."[35]

A second route Michnik takes in an effort to supplement an ethic of responsibility with one of ultimate ends is to adamantly identify with "the Polish people, . . . with all that is weak, oppressed, and humiliated." After all, "the ethos of the Polish intellectual . . . is the ethos of someone who fights for freedom and is on the side of the weak . . . [not of] power and hierarchy" (Chapters 3 and 24). Obviously, this is an ideal statement about the appropriate calling for a civic intellectual. To side with the weak is to deny oneself privilege and power, which Michnik argues categorically divide a people and corrupt rulers and ruled alike. Siding with and defending the weak politically, keeps you morally humble and honest. The risk here, and Michnik recognizes it, is that unless one searches for common ground with opponents, is both partisan and tolerant, able to listen, not simply broadcast, one may end up absolutizing the virtues of the weak and become intolerant and self-righteous in their defense.

A third route Michnik travels in his effort to bring morality to bear on democracy is his personal effort to "transcend the limits of [his] own grievances," to inject an element of mercy in political life (Chapter 24). He even provides some evidence that his effort is appreciated, notably by Lech Wałęsa, who on one occasion says, "You know Adam, I admire you. In your place, if I'd had to deal with a guy like myself, I would probably have slit his throat. You are a saint. You let me live" (Chapter 3). In a similar vein, Michnik refuses to reply to the sometimes crude criticisms Cardinal Glemp directs at him and *Gazeta*. "I remind myself that mercy must come before justice and I bite my tongue" (Chapter

34. To explain the risk: in response to one of many jejune comments by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, in this particular instance, to his observation that things were more "complicated" than Michnik made out, Michnik responded, "Complicated, yes, but only the asshole isn't" (Chapter 3).

35. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 119.

24). Mercy is not weakness. "I'm the last person to pander to my fellow countrymen" (Chapter 23). Principle circumscribes popularity. When one encounters situations, organizations, or people who have "lost the capacity to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood," who are impervious to "reasoned persuasion," one must resort to "a sharp, piercing shout and coarse words that can disturb the internal order of the self-infatuated mind" (Chapter 2). And then one must accept the frightening risk accompanying such a stance: estrangement from one's society, culture, and nation. Can one who operates with a selfishly utilitarian understanding of democracy summon the civic courage to take that risk and pay that price? Doesn't an act of that order require a "moral impulse," a sense of the profound connection between democracy and individual dignity; one that makes acts of solitary public courage possible—and necessary! Possible and necessary for the individual who, faced with immoral alternatives that offer no real choice, for example, between Hitler and Stalin, refuses the "lesser political evil" and joins Michnik in saying, "I would pick Marlene Dietrich" (Chapter 2).

Democracy and the "Ordinary Hero"

Democracy needs Don Quixotes, with their ethic of ultimate ends, and Sancho Panzas, with their ethic of responsibility. It needs actors and institutions whose distinctly opposed moral and political competencies are at their best testy, at their worst nasty. The strategic *and* moral question is, which should predominate in a democracy? In extraordinary situations Michnik chooses Marlene Dietrich, but he regularly votes for Sancho Panza.

He says, "I don't think in utopian categories anymore. Solidarity was an anti-utopian movement, a movement without utopia. . . . Solidarity brought something completely new to European culture, and by that I mean the primacy of practical thought over utopian thought. . . . Solidarity fought for a civil society that is imperfect by nature" (Chapter 4). "We know . . . that every political order is polluted by the original sin of imperfection. We reject the belief in political utopia. We know that our future is an imperfect society, *a society of ordinary people and ordinary conflicts.*"[36]

36. Chapter 16 (emphasis added). He immediately goes on to say, "precisely for this reason, a society that must not renounce its ethical norms in the name of political illusions."

To the argument that democracies are procedural arrangements with uncertain policy outcomes, Michnik adds the observation that they are fallible and flawed entities whose deliberate lack of perfection guards against the perfection of the concentration camp. In the spirit of Gombrowicz's query, "The question that I put to Catholics is not what kind of God do they believe in, but what kind of people do they want to be?" Michnik wants a Poland of "ordinary, decent, rational people" (Chapter 24). He does not want saints, SS men, or cadres fighting for a utopia; believers for whom ideas are more real than the people in whose name and over whose bodies they are pursued. Like Arthur Koestler, he prefers the reality of men to the abstraction "mankind."

Michnik's presentation of self reflects his idea and pursuit of an "ordinary" Polish democracy. He describes himself as an "unserious" man, a reasonable man, one who says, "This role of the martyr doesn't suit me at all" (Chapter 3). He demonstrates this position in his interviews. After one of his stays in prison, Michnik went to work at the Rosa Luxemburg factory. It was, he says, "my first direct, and warm, contact with the world of workers." The ever-serious Cohn-Bendit asks Michnik, "So that phase can be seen as your forced Maoist phase?" To which he replies, "No, not Maoist. . . . The Rosa Luxemburg workforce is composed primarily of women, the most beautiful girls in Warsaw." Not to be denied, Cohn-Bendit goes on to ask, "Were the contacts between you and the workers simple from the very beginning, or was there a period of suspicion towards you?" Michnik: "Suspicion, no, never. It is I who was shy. But I never lost my way on the path leading from eroticism to politics." Later, referring to Solidarity, Michnik identified its only utopia as "the Ten Commandments and the Gospels—except for the commandment about adultery" (Chapter 3). And describing the period when every two weeks he spent forty-eight hours in jail, he complained that "the worst wasn't being in jail, but waiting to get there; we all knew full well that we would be put in jail, but we never knew when. This difficult situation ruined my sex life. I couldn't make dates anymore" (Chapter 3).

What is one to make of all this? The answer is uncomplicated. Michnik has a Rabelaisian sense of humor, an irrepressible and pointed irreverence that fits his understanding of democracy. Democracy is not the preserve of saints, cadres, and heroes. Democracy is fallible, "eternal imperfection, a mixture of sinfulness, saintliness, and monkey business."[37] Like Adam, democracy "stutters."

37. Postface. It is political science's loss that this phrase will never make the political science textbooks.

To the challenges facing new democracies, Michnik favors practical, not charismatic or philosophical, solutions. He tolerates the Kwasniewski government because it respects democratic norms, and was chosen by a citizenry acting in a democratic manner. Which is not to say that he is enthusiastic about this government. That becomes clear when he discusses the "restoration," the surprising electoral success of former Communists throughout the eastern parts of Europe. His first observations are Quixote-like, charismatic: "[The] mark of a restoration is its sterility. . . . Revolution had grandeur, hope, and danger." "I do not like restoration. I do not like its ethics or aesthetics, its shallowness or boorishness." But he concludes à la Panza: "Nevertheless one cannot simply reject this velvet restoration. One has to domesticate it. One has to negotiate with it as with an adversary and/or partner. One has to permeate it with the values of the velvet democratic revolution" (Chapter 25). Within Michnik, the ordinary democrat Panza sets the terms for the extraordinary Quixote.

Along with the "restoration" of former Communists, Michnik is apprehensive about the Leninist legacy of nearly a half century. He sees it as more than a residual stain readily dissolved by an electoral detergent.[38] For Michnik the legacy of Leninism and the interwar experience in Poland challenge and weaken the political, social, and moral constitutions of democracy. "We lack the tradition of democratic coexistence in the framework of a democratic order. . . . In Central and Eastern Europe, each of our countries has its distinct biography, its own secret knowledge about threats to democratic order" (Chapter 16). Michnik's practical response to this "lack" has been extraordinary. As editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza* he has created a strategic civic institution and the nucleus of a civic community.

In *Kings or People,* Reinhard Bendix "propose[d] to treat intellectual mobilization—the growth of a reading public and of an educated secular elite dependent on learned occupations—as an independent cause of social change."[39] And Michnik? "I say that *Gazeta Wyborcza* is playing a major role in creating a new language in which to discuss and evaluate the world around us. *For us,* Gazeta *is not just a newspaper, it's an institution of civil society, an institution of Polish democracy*" (Chapter 24; emphasis added). *Gazeta*'s role? To create and disseminate a civic idiom, an

38. See Adam Przeworski, *Sustainable Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 48, for a statement of the "detergent" thesis.

39. Bendix, *Kings or People,* 266.

ethos of partisan and reasoned debate; to reclaim those who belonged to Solidarity, "all those people [who] amid errors, inconsistencies, ill-considered decisions, and demoralizing arguments . . . carried out the historic task of the anti-Communist revolution in Poland" (Chapter 25). *Gazeta*'s institutional vocation? To articulate the connection between liberal proceduralism, tolerant individualism, and a "concern [with] the human condition" (Chapter 5); to permeate all of Poland with the spirit of "ordinary" democracy *and* the extraordinary courage to defend it.

Democracy is a contradiction and a paradox. Without heroism, public virtues cannot be sustained; they gradually deteriorate into egotistical calculi of social, economic, and political self-interests. The individual gets replaced by the self.[40] And yet as every liberal disciple of the Enlightenment and foe of Nietzsche knows, the charismatic hero abhors, in fact is incapable of, democratically appreciating the deficiencies of average people. Michnik responds to this "dilemma" in a Weberian spirit. All historical experience, says Weber, "confirms the truth that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible. But to do that a man must be a leader, and not only a leader but a hero as well, *in a very sober sense of the word.*"[41] In short, democracy needs "ordinary heroes." Adam Michnik is an ordinary hero, a genuine man whose contributions to the culture of democratic individualism and toleration in Poland and the world are fallible and invaluable.

40. See Daniel Bell's discussion of the individual and the self in his outstanding work, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

41. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," p. 128 (emphasis added).