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INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY AND STATE – PERSPECTIVE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

Abstract

The analyses presented in this article cover: 1) problems related to specificity of contemporary communication processes, determining conditions and influencing our ability to view reality; and 2) ambiguities of security culture facing contradictions arising in state-society-citizen relations. The author aims to demonstrate that in the situation of overwhelming communication acceleration, individuals adjusting to the *rhythm* imposed by technology lose mindfulness and consequently the ability of perceiving reality in a critical way. In this situation, the state / the authority is presented with convenient opportunities of shaping reality according to the demand determined by particular interests. In this way the public sphere is appropriated, individuals are deluded by constructs / pretences giving them appearances of security, whereas they are in the information insecurity *bubble*.

Keywords: *individual, society, state, information security, information insecurity, security culture, post-truth, authority pressure, discourse power*

Introduction

The interest in issues related to assuring internal and external security of a state organization is usually focused on: the state's tasks in this area; the institutional system; procedures, ways of accomplishing tasks; as well as level of disruptions, severity and scale of particular threats; and degree of effectiveness in eliminating and counteracting them; which allows us to comparatively assess the level or state of security culture, showing certain deficits and dysfunctions, though, above all, efforts related to this area are aimed at developing procedures and defining behavior desirable from the perspective of citizens' security, but also the efficiency and security of a state entity as a certain whole.

This state-centric approach, though justified, generally allows us to analyze only one dimension of the issue of intentionality. It is assumed here from the starting point that the construct of state security as such is a superior goal, while determinants allowing us to reach a certain direction and level of security are objectified. While emphasizing once again that this approach is deeply justified, we must observe that within a particular state entity one can distinguish various contradictions, conflicts or different evaluations and ideas concerning

the way this reality should be organized. Certain arguments pointing at their legitimacy can be seen (which does not mean we are forced to share such views) when we take a closer look at contextual factors determining particular behavior. It seems that such differentiation cannot be omitted. Therefore, while pointing at the need for providing collective security by the state, we must point out that the state or the authority is not infallible. Thus the power of the state, though omnipresent (within a given territorial entity), does not have and cannot have a rational nature. Rationalists used to reduce the complexity and inscrutability of reality and replace uncertainty with dummies they call rational projects and actions (cf. Oakeshott, 1999, pp. 21–22). However, the state and the power reflect the complexity and shortcomings of the society which created them. Imperfection is at the core of all human activity. However, an impressive collection of solutions and tools that the state has at its disposal in all its imperfection to manage the society – gives it a significant advantage over citizens. Therefore it is worth considering what is left for citizens in this necessary and fatal situation.

The scope of analyses conducted in this text will cover: 1) problems related to the specificity of contemporary communication processes determining conditions and affecting our ability to view reality; and 2) ambiguities of security culture facing contradictions emerging in the state-society-citizen relation. In order to consider this dilemma, we need to define our starting point and adopt an anti-naturalist perspective, which assumes that the social world is socially constructed. Thus ways of perceiving reality are determined by contextual factors. In order to accomplish such research objective, we need to consider three issues: 1) first we will determine/indicate scopes of meaning and scopes of ties between meanings in the information security category; 2) then we will present, adopting a constructivism perspective, conditions, possibilities and limitations of perceiving reality by individuals; 3) finally, on this background, the author will present selected problems reflected in conditions of the state (the author will analyze the case of liberal democracy) aiming at appropriation of the security culture construct in its particular interests.

Information security – types and interdependencies

Information security (or security of information) is an ambiguous concept, as it possesses a number of references. First of all – we can indicate procedures and technical devices securing access to certain types of information (due to its sensitivity), which make it impossible, or at least difficult, for unauthorized persons to obtain and use such information for (generally) other than original purposes.

Secondly – this problem is connected with an important issue concerning what, to whom and for what reasons is to be open/available and what is to remain secret. Therefore, the use of particular limitations in access to information due to its significance is related to the necessity of determining criteria (requirements) which must be met in order to be granted access to such information, as well as the reasons why some information requires special protection, or limitation of the number of persons authorized to access it. There are many problems connected with the issue of access to information understood in this way, but it should be noticed that it becomes particularly serious in liberal democracy. Tension in this area is caused by, for example, the fact that citizens demand the highest possible transparency from the state or the authorities. It should be observed here that generally this postulate is right, since transparency in this area provides citizens with the possibility of exercising effective control over those in power. A pattern can be observed here – politicians in opposition (though not only), for the purposes of their political fight, demand, usually rightly, that certain affairs be revealed (thus stimulating citizens' interest). The same politicians, when they seize power, are prone to reveal only some issues that are uncomfortable for their predecessors (political opponents). Regardless of the problems revealed in political rivalry – we can see a certain paradox here. It turns out that citizens, for their own good, should not know too much about many or even about the majority of affairs occurring in their country.

The dilemma outlined here shows the problem of state efficiency and security on the one hand, but on the other hand – justified concerns, worries, and even common curiosity of citizens, which, facing incomprehensible obstacles, develops (as a result of these difficulties) quite frequently (and usually

much later) into quite justifiable fears. Nevertheless, it seems that in liberal democracy, anxiety arising from lack of knowledge of certain issues concerning state mechanisms should not be appeased by referring to the imperative of trust. An individual may suffer some slights and offences from the state, whose citizen he or she is. And if so, in this uneven fight, individuals must have the possibility to defend themselves and to assert their rights. An additional moral and actual barrier created by the state does not facilitate this, nor does it demonstrate the state's good intentions.

Thirdly – another issue that could be distinguished here is, generally speaking, the specificity of communication processes, including their determinants, course and consequences. Information is a certain content (knowledge) expressed in a particular way, which is communicated to a person or a group of people for a particular purpose. It always has its creator and sender, though a sender does not always have to be a creator (though, admittedly, even if a sender is not a creator, they somehow transform the information passed on), as well as a recipient – addressee. The concept of information is inextricably connected with the communication process. Information is a reflection (an image) of something, namely it contains/carries certain knowledge of something. The shape of information may be transformed in the communication process. Finally, which is worth emphasizing here, communication processes (information flow) are, as already indicated, intentional or purposeful. This purpose, or intention, usually determines the shape of information. In this context, scientists usually emphasize the truthfulness of information. A reservation must be made here – the search for criteria of such truthfulness is usually extremely troublesome, while discussion of this issue gravitates naturally to manipulation – i.e. influencing recipients' beliefs and attitudes by means of appropriately prepared information messages (this is not only about the truthfulness of a single item of information, but about the shape of the message, and therefore the choice of information which builds a certain image).

Taking into account the multitude and complexity of problems outlined in the above differentiations, in this text the author will attempt at capturing the determinants and specificity of the issue of the relationality of an individual, society and state, in dimensions defined in the second and third of the meanings of information security outlined here. Further on, the author will focus

on factors which lead to transformations, as a result of which the information insecurity space is created. The space in which individuals comprising society generally feel powerless.

PERSPECTIVE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM – COMMUNICATION PROCESSES VERSUS PERCEPTION OF REALITY

Starting from the anti-naturalistic ontological position indicated in the introduction, we need to: 1) reject the view of the existence of social phenomena which are independent of our interpretation, and simultaneously assume that: 2) the possibilities of understanding them within the interpretive trend are available only within discourses/traditions (cf. Marsh, Furlong, 2006, p. 26). Assuming thus that the social world is socially constructed, and that discourse is a certain driving force (Fairclough, Duszak, 2008, p. 8), it must be indicated that the properties of this force are revealed in the relationship between *meaning* and *materiality*, adopting the shape of *central dialectical axis* determined by such categories as *origin*, *consolidation*, *reproduction* and *transformation* of social phenomena (Fairclough, Duszak, 2008, p. 8).

In an attempt to 1) refute the accusation of arbitrariness concerning the way in which reality is perceived, adopted in this article, and simultaneously 2) justify and show specificity of the analyzed categories of information security and security culture and complexity of their relationality – we need to indicate determinants of reality perception. Thus our attempt at showing the properties of this process takes into account at least five aspects: 1) through transforming ideas, products of the mind – into material objects located outside the mind, each time we give these objects relative stability (Leach, 1989, p. 49); 2) however, then we do not discover the truth about the world, but perceive the world only as our cultural background implies (Leach, 1989, pp. 37–38); 3) simultaneously, in spite of this limitation, it is the language that constitutes the only interpretation of existence (cf. Maurin, 1978, pp. 6–7); 4) and although the language-materiality relationality does not offer the certainty of rules of logic; 5) simultaneously, in every way of existence we can find some reasonable

structure of the world (world properties) in which we live (cf. Pawluczuk, 1994, p. 114). Therefore, our judgments as products of actions and interactions have their own identity. They are not accidental, but they remain in a close relationship with particular conditions of history, society and culture (Rapley, 2010, pp. 25–26). That is why they should be considered within all limitations generated by this context.

Therefore a scientist who wants to understand the above-mentioned security constructs (but only them) must be interested in those elements of the dialectical process which create the hermeneutical space – namely human communication behaviors and their linguistic, cognitive, situational and cultural determinants (cf. Duszak, 1998, p. 13). And even though we cannot exclude the possibility that human beings may use their ability to speak – that is to use the system of signs and rules – in any way they want, it should be emphasized that speech is, in fact, a system of signs and rules developed by a community using a particular language, common for its members. Therefore, a person is somehow determined, or limited intentionally or by situation, thus being systemically limited. That is why it seems justified to attempt at analyzing mutual interdependencies between the system features and the features developed within its framework of meanings (cf. Grzegorczykowa, 1998, p. 38). Therefore, an inseparable part of these attempts is the search for the answer to the following question: who, how and when uses a particular language form? (van Dijk, 2001, p. 10), and the possibility of providing the answer to it demands that we go beyond the language, as *the place of linguistics is determined by the place of a language among its related phenomena* (Jakobson, 2009, p. 48).

Since speaking is connected *both with the past, time conformism, and unfaithful to that past and inconsistent with it* (Jakobson, 2009, p. 68), it is worth making an assumption that the system (a set of interdependencies) not only determines particular behaviors, but because of them it is subject to transformation. In this situation, everything turns out to be a discourse, because if a system is not something constant, it is justifiable to analyze it as a specific function of the field and play of the meaning (cf. Derrida, 2009, pp. 81–82). Discourse properties, or discourse dimension, is not fictitious. Therefore it seems appropriate to use the discourse existence term to emphasize its material dimension or possibility of materialization within the discourse (through the discourse).

Assuming thus that discourse plays a vital role in social practice – it must be assumed that it causes serious consequences (effects in an ideological dimension) in the area of authority/organization. Discourse practices through generated representations may create and reproduce (from one or another point of view) useful situations, knowledge subjects and social identities and relations between people and groups of people (cf. Fairclough, Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Thus discourse, being an event generalized by the political system and greatly linked with it, generates verbal and non-verbal meaning of this system (Rittel, 2005, p. 24). It also carries representation of what reality could or should look like (cf. Chiapello, Fairclough, 2008, pp. 386–387), so it possesses the creative power (power of changing or transforming). Since political institutions are of human creation, this fundamental circumstance indicates the possibility of cognition, and susceptibility to changing these materialized political constructs (even though structures resist any attempts of transformation). Here we can observe their discourse specificity, rooted in the nature of institutions which otherwise would have to be unchangeable structures – external and inaccessible for the society (cf. Waśkiewicz, 1998, p. 13). However, this creative power is not equally available for all entities operating within a particular system. In its critical variant, constructivism draws the attention of researchers towards subjective understanding – perceiving (cf. Stańczyk, 2014, pp. 223–224), offering, inter alia, a perspective in which constructs such as security culture, turn out to be manifestations of dominance and serve also, and sometimes exclusively, particular purposes of power holders.

The apparent nature of security

We should first of all point out that culture (in general) is of key importance to how all kinds of organizations operate. Culture simultaneously affects and is affected by: 1) formal framework of an organization, including its structure; as well as 2) usually less formalized, daily practice aimed at accomplishing its processes, namely activities whose completion is necessary in order to achieve particular goals/results (cf. Guldenmund, 2018, p. 22). Therefore culture constitutes a specific context for actions, combining various elements of the organizational system in an attempt to reach a goal, assuming simultaneously

that security (or at least – lasting) is a dominant feature of the culture of a particular organization (cf. Cooper, 2001, p. 1). Since individuals comprising society operate within a particular organizational form, such as the state – the concept of security culture should be extended to operation of the state organization in general – as a system. However, if we assume that security culture is of discourse – relational nature (interpreted as above), we have a certain detailed product of security discourse rooted in one convention or another.

Seeking general characteristics of this convention we cannot overlook the fact that a specific feature of the contemporary times (also defined as post-modernity) is crisis. However, for this post-modern era, it is a *normal*, *omnipresent* and *inscribed in logic of social life* phenomenon. It is not, as once was believed *society illness* which disturbs *normality* (Tyszka, 2010, p. 34). Then, if we talk about certain relative stability or a certain order in the way individuals affected by a particular culture interpret the world (Trzebiński, 2002, p. 19), in such conditions, antonyms of order and stability become their synonyms. In fact, we face chaos, It is manifested by information acceleration, which has become an organizing principle, which in fact disorganizes all our activity. Instead of seeking information, we are steered by it. Our capabilities have a certain limit – impassability. Such limitations can also be seen within the current technological development. However, technological development overtakes and exceeds our human capabilities – imposing a certain perspective on us. In a situation when our capabilities are lagging behind the possibilities offered by the current level of technological development: 1) it is very *convenient* for us to focus on information which is easily accessible, digestible, consistent with our point of view; and finally 2) there is growing demand for messages which reduce our anxiety and uncertainty of the world – creating unreality, a perspective, a relatively coherent image, which turns out to be apparent, and we find certainty only in this illusion. It comes as no surprise then, that in such unfair conditions of the race, post-truth or policy of post-truth offering distorted or false image of reality (cf. Koczanowicz, 2022, p. 167) – can be established with a simple set of social engineering instruments. The prerequisite is to possess resources enabling mass communication. That is why new forms of politics concentrate on: 1) managing information and

2) establishing control, or at least an advantage in the space governed by communication media. These are fundamental conditions of securing access to more and more material forms of power (cf. Barney, 2008, p. 144).

In this context, the growth of *invisible state* (cf. Śpiewak, 2005, p. 5) seems to be particularly worrying, as such a state is outside the control of citizens. The authority pressure may be unnoticeable, and yet methodically effective. The authority, thanks to accumulation of the already-mentioned resources, has a lot of possibilities allowing it *to make the administrative system independent of the legitimizing process of will shaping* (Habermas, 1983, p. 463). This independence occurs within the system of *ideology planning*, whose main task is to *draw our attention to particular subjects, thus pushing uncomfortable topics, problems and arguments below the attention threshold*, which is tantamount to *molding* public opinion (Habermas, 1983, p. 464). This method of acting clearly shows that authority and control do not contribute to the establishment of a community (van Deth, 2010, p. 461). The authority operating in this way in fact destroys and blocks bonds, offering only dummies that are useful for its particular goals.

Therefore the concept of citizenship is rightly treated as a remedy to deficits that can be seen in contemporary democratic states (van Deth, 2010, p. 460). Freedom cannot be secured only externally. And it is citizenship that assumes the existence and development of a certain relationship between an individual, society and state. Generally speaking, in its functional dimension, this relationality is expressed in the guarantee for certain citizen rights, citizens demanding protection from the state, but parallel expectations of citizen loyalty to the state (cf. van Deth, 2010, p. 465). Citizenship is thus characterized by the presence of mutual expectations as well as obligations. Preservation of minimum loyalty towards the state should not, however, lead to such relations (dependencies) which will prevent the society from protecting and defending its rights against expansive designs of the state (Chmielewski, Kamiński, 1999, s. 43). Only in non-democratic regimes the state must always be stronger than society (Chmielewski, Kamiński, 1999, s. 42). However, if we notice that people are inclined to treat their rights and obligations seriously but do not actively engage in public and political matters except for voting in elections (van Deth, 2010, p. 479), we may doubt whether this barrier is sufficient. We need to remember that every person who wishes *not to be tormented* with

politics in fact gives their will to others (cf. Crick, 2004, p. 20). It should also be remembered that *one of the greatest illusions of contemporary concepts of politics is the thesis that it is possible to resign from politics understood as a fight for dominance between groups representing different concepts of establishing the social system* (Mouffe, 2005, p. 8). Power is an instrument of ruling, and ruling is driven by the instinct of domination (Arendt, 1999, pp.46–47).

We should not forget that in one form of the system – liberal democracy – the degree of its acceptance by citizens plays a vital role (Lipset, 1998, p. 43). But even when liberal democracy lures citizens with a claim that *it does not assume one specific concept of good life, but only procedural presentation of interactions between people, regulated by their rights and freedoms* (Kelly, 2007, pp. 59–60), we must remember that: 1) the guarantee of the subjective status of individuals cannot be sought only in formal rules (cf. Waśkiewicz, 2012, p. 262); and in addition, it turns out that in liberal democracy 2) even the organization of social life, namely its management according to predetermined rules, is difficult (Ryszka, 1984, p. 11), because in the process of ruling, especially in situation of great tension, it may become clear that *unambiguously defined common good, for which everybody would agree or would be convinced by means of rational arguments* does not exist, since different individuals and groups have *different* definitions of common good (Schumpeter, 1995, p. 314). That is why we can always see tensions in public space. They are not destructive as long as both the ruled and the rulers have deeply rooted, unwritten norms of tolerance and moderation (cf. Levitsky, Ziblatt, 2018, p. 15).

Conclusion

In the situation described here the problem lies in the simultaneous necessity to ensure openness and transparency of the system through control mechanisms and to guarantee its protection and maintain its efficiency. As we can easily notice, we are witnessing the continuous growth of the state, which enters new areas and rations them, thus confirming its rule. The contemporary state establishes a certain order through planned actions, but it also skillfully omits citizens in this process – in this way appropriating the space convenient for accomplishment of particular goals of certain groups. Although we enjoy numerous benefits that living in the state offers, if individuals are to be protected in their subjective dimension, we need to equip citizens in power control tools. Trust in state / government, as we already mentioned, may be nothing but a figure: a barrier, a means to enforce citizens obedience – making them submissive. A serious problem, as indicated here, is the pressure of power discourse, because authorities have a great possibility of spreading and imposing post-truth – they can create an illusion of security while trying to lock individuals composing the society in constructs built on post-truth. In this way public space is appropriated, and individuals are offered an illusion of dummies giving them only pretences of the feeling of security, while in fact they are stuck in the information insecurity *bubble*.

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