

## **Community and Immunity. The Idea of Community Immunity in Publications of Polish Hygienists and Literary Works From The Interwar Period Concerning The Polish-Soviet War**

The dissertation is an attempt to reconstruct the early (modern) Polish discourse on community immunity. ‘Community immunity’ is defined as: 1) a community’s potency to respond to environmental (ideological, geopolitical, or biological) danger; 2) a community’s capacity to neutralize internal enemies.

In the first paragraphs, I ask two questions: 1) What is the initial point of modern discourse on community immunity in general?; 2) Where should we look for the Polish variant of this discourse? I claim that answering both questions requires focusing on sources written in the time of 1) the birth of the nation-state; 2) the rise of capitalism; 3) the first attempts to establish biopolitical power. In short, we should focus on times when *power* began to treat human bodies mainly as – military and economic – resources, while the main purpose of the *power* was to protect those resources and – at the same time – maintain state sovereignty.

Hence, in the Western European context, reflection on the modern discourse on community immunity should refer to the sources from the very beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Basing on the research of historians, I argue that the Polish case is slightly different since the modernization of Polish lands was delayed. This delay is one of the two main reasons why I claim that examining Polish discourse on community immunity should concern sources from the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second one is connected to the fact that in the first years of its existence, the Second Polish Republic faced two crises. The first (medical or biological) one was connected with depopulation, epidemics, and – projected by some publicists – degeneration of the Polish race (all of these – real or alleged – phenomena were, in some way, a consequence of WWI). The second (militaristic or ideological) danger for the Polish community came from the East and was connected with the invasion of the Soviet Army (1919-1920) and the constant threat of social revolution. Both mentioned crises stimulated the discussion on the Polish community’s capacity to face external (environmental, geopolitical) or internal (Polish communists, disgenic people, minorities).

The dissertation is an attempt to reconstruct the core of this discussion in two types of sources: publications of Polish hygienists and literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920 written in times of the Second Polish Republic. Examining both classes of sources I intend to answer the following questions: 1) What ideas, civilizational processes, and social

phenomena support the identification of community's power with its immunity; what ideas, civilizational processes, and social phenomena are the consequences of the identification of community's power with its immunity? 2) What is the persuasive power of the idea of community immunity? (How does this idea shape an understanding of individual patriotic duties?).

In the dissertation, the name 'hygienists' refers to the group of activists (often doctors) who were active in Poland at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of their activity was to improve the quality and quantity of the Polish population through the popularization of sanitation, fighting epidemics, and establishing regulations concerning reproduction (including eugenics). According to the hygienists, all of the mentioned actions were the most meaningful manifestation of patriotism – they argued that biological well-being and quantity of population is the key geopolitical and economic factor. Consequently, the works of the hygienists can be treated as a manifestation of a certain idea of community and beliefs concerning the duties of its members. In my dissertation, I attempt to reconstruct this idea and these beliefs. In general, my research concerns hygienists' publications from 1885-1939, with a focus on the sources from 1915-1930.

Examining the militaristic variant of the Polish discourse on community immunity, I refer to literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War (written between 1919 and 1939). My research concerns mostly novels, short stories, and dramas that are – more or less realistic – a record of wartime events. Sometimes I refer also to Tyrtaeon poetry or antirevolutionary or anti-bolshevik works that are not directly dedicated to the Polish-Soviet War.

The aim of research on both classes of sources is to answer the following questions:

- 1) What tools do authors use to formulate a diagnosis concerning Polish community immunity? What role in this diagnosis was attributed to the history of the community's contact with the negativity of the environment?
- 2) How do authors perceive the internal structure of the community? How do "racial" problems affect community immunity?
- 3) What role in stimulating community immunity was attributed to effective death management?
- 4) How does the discourse on community immunity shape the relationship between individuals and community? What does 'patriotism' mean in texts concerning community immunity? What is the correlation between the imperative of sacrificing

individual well-being to the motherland and the idea of debt (including ‘primordial debt’)?

- 5) How both groups of texts are correlated with local intellectual traditions (Polish romanticism, *antemurale* tradition), the heritage of the Western philosophy (e.g. Hobbesian idea of Leviathan, the figure of *katechon*) and civilizational processes (the rise of capitalism, popularization of racial discourse, rapid development of science).
- 6) What is the connection between Polish hygienists’ publications and literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War?

## **Methodology**

In my research, publications of hygienists and literary works concerning The Polish-Soviet War are treated as fragments of discourse on community immunity. Following Teun Van Dijk’s approach, I propose to understand ‘discourse’ as a use of language that: 1) contains some (political, aesthetical, philosophical, ethical) ideas; 2) tends to interact (to form beliefs, to change political reality). Examining both classes of texts requires: 1) finding statements concerning community immunity; 2) describing ideas that support these statements; 3) characterizing the ideological potential of these statements.

Examining the Polish variant of discourse on community immunity, I refer to the works of the scholars who contributed to research on biopolitics (especially Michel Foucault and Roberto Esposito).

The most important Foucaultian notion applied to the research is *population*. *Population* is a conceptual collective being composed of many human bodies that: 1) are perceived as resources; 2) face environmental dangers; 3) are objects of the power’s interventions; 4) are evaluated and classified by their value for the community. In the research, *population* is treated as a model of understanding community. I claim that this model is useful in examining problems concerning community immunity for two reasons. Firstly, *population* is essentially connected with the problem of community immunity: it was created as a conceptual tool, which helps to evaluate the effects of confrontation between human masses and the environment and enables authorities to project interventions that correct these effects. Secondly, the notion of *population* opens up a reflection on two kinds of community immunity that are crucial to sources analyzed in the dissertation: 1) community’s potency to respond to environmental (ideological, geopolitical, or biological) danger; 2) community’s capacity to neutralize internal enemies.

When it comes to Esposito's philosophy, two of his notions are crucial for the dissertation. The first one is the *incorporation of negativity* (vaccination). Esposito uses this term to describe activities that tend to manage the negativity (death, suffering of individuals) in a way that stimulates community immunity. This notion is useful in examining texts, whose authors connect community's defensive power with the quantum of negativity that community has incorporated in the past. The second one is *munus*, which is a part of both words – 'community' and 'immunity'. *Munus* means 'tribute' and is a notion that facilitates reflection on the connection between the idea of community immunity and discourse on debt to the motherland (including 'primordial debt').

### **The state of research**

"Rasa i nowoczesność" by Małgorzata Gawin seems to be the best research on the history of the Polish hygienist movement. Gawin presents the core of hygienists' views, reporting discussions and controversies in Polish eugenic circles. Another work of great value is "Marzenie o narodzie doskonałym..." written by Piotr Madajczyk, where the activity of Polish hygienists is presented in a wide Eastern European context. Polish hygienist movements were also the subject of studies conducted by Beata Szczepańska ("Higiena szkolna w szkolnictwie ogólnokształcącym Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej") and Rafał Kozłowski ("Między medycyną a polityką..."). All the texts are works of historians that ignore philosophical contexts or (at most) treat them as a background for historical studies. The dissertation is, therefore, the first attempt to reconstruct the concept of community embodied in the publications of Polish hygienists and examine how this concept relates to the tradition of European philosophy.

The problem of literary representation of the Polish-Soviet War was the subject of research carried out by Maria Janion ("Płacz generała..."), Izabela Głowacka ("Wojna polsko-ruska..."), Sławomir Buryła and Ewa Pogonowska ("Dzikie biesy..."). However, the most important study concerning this problem is probably the monography by Maciej Urbanowski ("Rok 1920 w literaturze polskiej..."). None of them examined the problem of community immunity or the idea of community in the literature concerning the Polish-Soviet War.

The publications of the hygienists have not been juxtaposed with literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War yet. The aim of the study is therefore to fill the gap in research on both classes of sources and stimulate the reflection on the Polish path to modernity.

In summary, the dissertation's originality lies in:

- 1) Reconstruction of the idea of community in publications of Polish hygienists (with a focus on problems concerning community immunity).
- 2) Reconstruction of the idea of community in literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War (with a focus on problems concerning community immunity).
- 3) Presentation of ideological and philosophical aspects of discourse on community immunity.
- 4) Presentation of similarities between the idea of community in publications of Polish hygienists and literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War.

## Summary

The first part of the dissertation (*Population and immunitas*) is dedicated to presenting research tools. The first chapter concerns the notion of *population*. I notice that *population* is a model of human community that rise as a consequence of two phenomena: 1) the rapid development of industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which increased the demand for human labor power; 2) the development of science (especially statistics, demography, but also medicine and anthropology) that enabled people to project corrections in a stream of biological processes on the level of masses rather than individuals. A *population* is, therefore, a perfectly modern collective being: it rose in reaction to capitalistic industry needs and its existence was made possible by the achievements of the Enlightenment. In the second chapter, the connection between *population* and racial discourse is explained. Following Michel Foucault, I notice that *population* is often presented as a heterogenous being – its body is collected from parts that are productive (useful) and those, which existence and reproduction are perceived as a danger to the community. In the next chapters I explain the essence of *security* mechanism, explore connections between *population* and the discourse on degeneration, and underline the relationship between *population* and the tradition of understanding (self-) recognition as a way of saving a community.

In the second chapter of the first part, three components of Roberto Esposito's philosophy are analyzed: the relationship between *communitas* and *immunitas*, the mechanism of incorporation of negativity, and the figure of *katechon*. When it comes to the first problem, four of Esposito's observations are crucial: 1) in the modern European model of understanding politics, community is established for immunological reasons – creating a distance between individuals, community helps to neutralize negativity of human nature; 2) being a part of community requires paying *munus* on its behalf; 3) uncontrolled expansion of *munus* can lead to the annihilation of individuals and to absolute predomination of collective subjectivity; 4)

community produces mechanisms that help to protect from the expansion of *munus* (such as proprietary laws or civil liberties). Afterwards, three examples of the mechanism of incorporation of negativity are given: 1) theory of Hobbes, in which freedom to kill other people is not completely dismissed by community but assigned to the sovereign, who distributes micro-doses of destruction in order to protect community from the consequences of uncontrolled violence; 2) Rene Girard's theory, in which ritual murder on the scapegoat protects the community from the risk of annihilation; 3) Carl Schmitt's comments on the problem of *complexio oppositorum*. In the last subsection, two interpretations of the *katechon* figure are presented. In the first, proposed by Carl Schmitt, *katechon*'s (power's) role is to delay or drive away the catastrophe that threatens the community. In the second (its author is Roberto Esposito) *katechontic* power's intention is to transform anomic (and possibly dangerous for authorities) masses into one collective subject.

The second part of the dissertation concerns the publications of hygienists. In the first chapter, I examine the methods hygienists use to recognize the actual condition of the Polish *population* and the results of Polish doctors' research. I underline the role statistics played in shaping hygienists' social views. According to the hygienists, the most dangerous phenomenon for the Polish *population* was depopulation which weakened the community's immunity to internal and external dangers. The hygienists claim then that the role of doctors is also to stimulate the growth of the *population* by raising awareness of the impact that individual people's decisions have on the condition of the community. Almost equal importance was attributed to the protection of the Polish population from dysgenic phenomena such as alcoholism, prostitution, or the reproduction of "degenerated individuals". In the last subsection of the first chapter, the catastrophic aspects of hygienists' publications are analyzed. In summary, I notice that hygienists' activity corresponds with the two mentioned interpretations of the *katechon* figure. Firstly, using statistics, they tend to reduce many human bodies to the figure of one collective body (*population*). Secondly, hygienists pretend to be a power that drives catastrophe away from the community. The aim of the second chapter is to examine how hygienists understood the relationship between community and individual. I focus mainly on texts that express the demand to sacrifice individual well-being on behalf of the community's immunity. I underline the fact that hygienists tend to mediate individual conscience by the filter of collective being (*population*). In summary of the second chapter, the publications of the hygienists are put into the context of Giorgio Agamben's, Adam Smith's, and George Wilhelm Hegel's ideas. In the third chapter, the economical aspects of Polish hygienists' publications are discussed. I examine

two main problems: 1) a conception of authorities as a steward, whose mission is to protect the community from the risk of wasting human resources; 2) the idea of (primordial) debt in hygienists' publications. The fourth chapter concerns the relationship between the Polish population and war. I put special attention to discourse on using the negativity of war to stimulate community immunity (for example by sending "dysgenic" people to the battlefield). The discourse is analyzed in contexts of Esposito's philosophy (incorporation of negativity), Foucault's research on racism, and modern discourse on transforming remains or barrens (marshlands) into capital (resource). The fifth chapter concerns discourse on war as an environment that stimulates cognition. In the last chapter of the second part, hygienists' publications are interpreted in the context of Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy and confronted with the idea of the commonwealth.

The third part is dedicated to the literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War. In the first chapter, I characterize a danger that was attributed to the Soviet (military and ideological) invasion. I point out that Bolsheviks were perceived as a biological, civilizational, and religious threat to the Polish nation. The second chapter concerns discourse on internal enemies (peasants, minorities, Polish communists) in literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War. In the third, I examine the discourse on Polish immunity to both external and internal dangers related to the Soviet invasion, underlining the role that was attributed to negativity as the most effective way of stimulating the national immune system. In the fourth chapter, I focus on the texts in which war is treated as a vaccination that strengthens the Polish community. The contact with Soviet negativity was perceived as an occasion: 1) to neutralize the potential of internal enemies; 2) for the bloodshed that stimulates the collective immune system; 3) for religious and spiritual redemption of Polish people; 4) to pay the debt that emerged in the moment of the rising of the Polish Second Republic. I noticed that according to authors of analyzed texts, after 1920, the Polish community had been strengthened exactly in those areas where the Bolsheviks' power could be the most devastating. In the last paragraphs of the fourth part, I focus on the discourse on land reform as an incorporation of the Bolsheviks' negativity: the quantum of communistic proposals was supposed to be absorbed by the community and used as a vaccine protecting the Polish nation from the social revolution.

In the summary, I point out the similarities between the publications of the hygienists and the literary works concerning the Polish-Soviet War with a focus on a) the medicalization of social life; b) the racial discourse; c) the idea of primordial debt; d) the conviction that contact with negativity can effectively stimulate the community immunity; e) the idea of sacrifice on behalf

of the motherland and conviction that this sacrifice is a path to immortality; f) the modernization process of the Polish political sphere and the anti-modernization discourse; g) the modern discourse on power as a *katechon*.