1. A characteristic feature of a modern state is dichotomy of its development. On one hand, it is striving after unification and universality of social, political and economic solutions aiming to integrate the world, but on the other, there is a growth of tendencies disintegrating a country, development of localness, aspiring to give local communities high level of independence and self-deciding powers, that is: the reverse of massive society. The phenomena connected with unification and aspirations for preserving local identity are complementary and complement one another. The globalization of world-wide system does not mean its inner homogeneity. The world is perceived as an internally diverse reality\(^1\).

The advance of globalization can be reflected by economic solutions going beyond the borders of a country, transfer of technique and technology, migrations of population, universality of cultural values as well as social and political solutions, the growth of interest in issues concerning the whole world in both politicians and society, an increase in number of institutions and international organizations, the development of international law.

At the same time, the development of local and regional feelings is not without significance as, separatist movements, aiming to preserve their own cultural identity among national, ethnic and religious minorities, are growing in strength. In the sphere of production there is a tendency to abandon unified, standardized big-scale

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\(^1\) C.f. E. Polak, *Przemiany cywilizacji współczesnej w sferze kultury materialnej*, Gdańsk 1996, chapter. II i IV.
enterprise for the benefit of produce corresponding to strictly defined needs. Massive marketing is being replaced by market segmentation and selective promotion actions matching the changes in production. Big companies are falling prey to inertia under their own weight; massive means of transfer are losing their massive character when they crash with significant competition from local structures. Massiveness is becoming a sign of the past².

Both globalization and decentralization of social, political and economic life is a consequence of changes in civilization that are taking place³. Globalization is the demand of our times, a response to such threats to humanity as: pollution of natural environment, poverty, famine, unemployment, depletion of natural resources, including water deficit, civilization diseases, escalation of terrorism and violence. Solving these problems requires initiative and international actions of specialist nature and international range, undertaken both by governments and non-government organizations.

Global phenomena and processes deprive the state of its position of a local monopolist, while it has no control over information, economy, scientific and technical development, nor does it have exclusive rights to establish law, because for its establishing requires taking into consideration arrangements and international agreements. Human rights take on a universal character and go beyond the exclusive competence of a state – their implication is judged not only by the international social opinion but also by international law and legal institutions⁴.

Science and technique occupies an important place in the globalization process. Their development is not possible without international cooperation. The progress depends on participation in international data banks and informative systems. Media exerts crucial influence on globalization of rights and on human behaviour – not only do they provide information about civilization changes of societies and countries but also they propagate specific cultural patterns and lifestyles. It is often noticed that the patterns of massive culture threaten national and local culture. In this respect, the impact of American culture cannot be underestimated, since the simplicity, attractive form and universality of American culture conquered the whole world. At the same time however, cultural unification is accompanied by cultural variety (subcultures).

As the process of world integration is progressing, the meaning of the notion state sovereignty evolving; namely – it is being limited. It is used to refer specifically to protection against threats from outside; little importance is attached to inner conflicts or individual issues, which decrease the problem of state representativeness, the influence of strength or power. On the other hand, globalization and social integration lead to a situation where political, social and economic problems underlie various international co-relations, the elements of which are not only national states but also different organizations and international institutions, regional groups, communities and local organizations. In this cooperation, particular attention is paid to such values as: respect to cultural diversity, democracy, partnership, solidarity, freedom, equality. The priority is to preserve the stability of international situation, eliminate drastic developmental disproportions and at the same time it is emphasized that the precondition underlying the introduction of global order is creating global awareness.

Globalization is also the target of strong criticism and contradiction from social and political forces. The tendency to excessive decentralization, concentration and standardizing of societies meets with disapproval as well as cultural homogeneity. The notion of world citizen is too vague and abstract for the average state citizen. A contradicting notion is localism, which decreases the distance between the ruling and the ruled, thus allowing citizens to identify themselves with social and political activities of government representatives, which state citizens can directly influence by assigning specific tasks and later having them account for the task realization.

The dichotomy of development that occurs between globalism and localism gives rise to many transformational conflicts, among which the following separatist tendencies of national and ethnic groups draw particular attention: minorities’ riots, social distrust of parties and the overall state organization, crisis of the traditional democratic institutions.

The development of separatist tendencies leads to constantly increasing number of countries. Currently, around 3 thousand peoples strive for national independence⁵. Taking into consideration that one of the indications of national identity (apart from identity awareness) is a language, it is estimated that at this time about 8 thousand languages are used, which can foster further tendencies to create national structures, and there are 192 countries at present. The Community of Independent States (former Soviet Union) is an example in this respect, since about 70 new state structures can be distinguished there. The ideology of creating new state structures plays an important role here, as well as the absolute idea of nationally homogeneous state, which can often take extreme forms.

The traditional democratic system puts majority in a privileged position. There are very few universal solutions efficiently protecting the rights of minority. Decentralization of power and introducing the rules of territorial self-government is a way to soothe conflicts. Separatist tendencies are the consequence of ignoring minority, thus it is a commonplace to impose the beliefs and patterns of majority onto minority; in a longer term, these phenomena results in exerting pressure, demanding autonomy and occasionally sovereignty; all attempts to unify a nation meet with resistance and have an opposite effect to what was intended. Sometimes, it is pointed out that local conflicts of national nature are the heritage of imperial times. It is a common belief that empires are the fathers of war. In the process of creating a superpower, different peoples languages and cultural influences are mixed in an artificial way, and when it gets weaker, people fight against one another, and its fall triggers chaos, tension and various threats. Ideologies appealing to national, racial or religious identity are the factors that ignite local conflicts. However, the most important mechanism triggering local conflicts, and, what is entailed, intolerance, xenophobia, fear of changes, is economic situation, and in particular the situation of crisis, characterized by malfunction of agriculture, industry, unemployment, inflation, lower standards of living.

Circumstances putting the traditional democratic institutions in crisis make societies passive, indifferent and skeptical towards events on a political scene, and reluctant to identify themselves with processes they witness. A huge rate of non-attendance at elections can be observed, so the choice of particular people is purely accidental, depending on accidental electorate. The influence of media on creating the image of a politician is increasing, and so is the influence of political advisors he is surrounded by. The so-called charisma and ability to present oneself in front of a TV camera are becoming more important than knowledge or competence.

Generally, it is thought that the dichotomy in social, political and economic life is a phase of civilization transformations, leading to the creation of a new quality of life, frequently referred to as informative. In the phase of transformations, the following regularities can be noticed: transforming from industrial to informative society, from technology based on strength to ultra-technology, from national to global economy, from short-term to long-term thinking, from centralization to decentralization, from institutionalized support to self-help, from representative to participating democracy, from hierarchy to web, from the North to the South, from the „or-or” scheme to multitude of choices. The characteristic feature of all transformations is withdrawal from massiveness, which is clearly visible both in production, distribution and in all kinds of broadly understood communication.

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2. In the process of withdrawal from massive society, the placement of power is of special importance. Despite the need for centralized decisions referring to the phenomenon of globalization, there is a strong tendency to foster direct democracy, where the society aspires to have direct impact on the course of issues that concern it. Decentralization of power gives all minorities greater chances for expressing their needs. Small local communities acquire a more natural character. There are frequently direct interpersonal relations within them. An individual has the opportunity to participate in the life of a community. This encourages preservation of cultural identity. At the same time, the openness of political life is greater, and there are more efficient mechanisms of social control over the organs of political power.

In the context of democratic changes, an important role is assigned to non-government organizations. They gather people who are interested not in gaining power but in taking care of problems and issues that are meaningful to them. These organizations adopted the rule of Roman Club as their leading message – “think globally, but act locally”. It is worth noting that local initiatives regarding agricultural transformations, environment protection, healthcare, educational reforms are crucial for the development of civilization.

The activities of non-government organizations are important signs of social engagement. People involved in these organizations are engaged in issues directly concerning them – they act as antibodies to the fossilized and bureaucratized formal structures.

In times of withdrawal from massive society, the role of political parties is changing. Parties put their own needs before the needs of the state or society. It is only before elections that they solicit for votes and seek electors. After gaining their support, they ignore their voters and forget about the promises they made before elections. Parties’ programs do not attach importance to those problems, either social, political or economic, that are really important, instead focusing on issues that could be good propaganda – carriers, i.e. the sphere of social pathology. Parties’ representatives do not have much to offer to their electors, therefore they concentrate on emphasizing the weak points of their opponents, which is when the election campaign turns into mutual slandering. A typical image of a politician was drawn on the pages of “Forum”: „Just imagine such a VIP. This overworked man devotes 70–80% of his time to completely useless activities: representation, silent presence, pulling wise

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Local Government and the Global Civil Society

faces. Apart from that, there is politicking: contra-intrigues, traps, lies, comedies. There is not much time left for really important matters, so the crucial decisions are made while improvising, which could not be tolerated by any private enterprise. If politics were to disappear, so would 90% of parasitic activities it entails. In this situation, political parties lose trust of society as a whole. During elections, they gain support on the basis of accidental criteria, for example: handsome candidate, with a nice smile or pretty wife.

Modern parliaments are perceived as old-fashioned institutions – their democratic activity consists in lengthy and complicated debates, discussions, negotiations, and constantly decreasing power. All the rights that are at parliament’s disposal to control government can turn against them, because parliament has the right to abolish government, but then it can also be dissolved. In parliamentary systems, the rules of the middle class are preferred, since representatives of the so-called lower class are not able to comprehend many complex issues of social, political or economic nature, and upper class specialists, experts are not always able to take care of everyday problems either. Therefore, the real power resides in middle-class people, which leads to rules of mediocrity, because democracy does not encourage the appearance of great leaders, distinguished masters of social and spiritual life.

The fact that candidates are elected for a given term of office, which is typical of democracy, is a phenomenon highly unfavorable for social and political life. This feature does not favour long-term activities. Frequently it leads to spectacular acts, the aim of which is to achieve short-term aims. The mechanisms that underlie these acts are of conservative nature, since people who have power are reluctant to run the risk of failure. Most frequently, they decide to take innovative actions under pressure.

Despite all signs of drawbacks to democratic rules, despite even the fact that it is often referred to as the highest stage of politics, after which there is only death of politics, democracy is perceived in a positive way in wide social opinion. It is associated with activities originating at the grass level, activities that are local, individual, with respect towards minority, equality of opportunities, citizens’ participation in exercising power, and not with top-down decisions and the will to make citizens happy. To face up to the task of respecting democracy, particular countries aim to strengthen the idea of decentralization of power. Decentralization is to be rooted upon treating local societies as objects and strong development the institutions of

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10 M. Król, Słownik demokracji, Kraków 1989, p. 93.
self-government. Decentralization is commonly defined as the process of transferring certain public function that were so far limited exclusively to the competence of central government and assigning them in the hands of organizations independent of government structures. These organizations are exempt from the hierarchic sub-ordination and the duty to represent the interests of local communities. In a decentralized model, the members of territorial councils (local legislative power) are chosen in direct elections and are subject to be controlled by their electors. Territorial executive authorities give account of their activities to councils, and control their own administration. Financial rights (for example: to lay taxes and use the income from taxes), which make it possible to undertake actions in the open, are an important attribute of self-government.

The phenomenon which expresses the aspiration for greater decentralization and widening local autonomy is regionalization. In some countries of Western Europe regional identity is as strong as state or national identity. Regional division reflects common historical traditions and cultural identity of particular regions of a country. Region is the highest unit of territorial organization of a country with a relatively big area and substantial population characterized by cultural, economic, social homogeneity and equipped with a number of legislative, executive and administrative competence. It is treated as a smaller homeland (in Germany, the notion Heimat means small homeland, whereas the notion Vaterland – big homeland). The concept of regionalization is associated with the idea of self-governing state, where the local self-government functions as a link between social and political issues. Self-government is the opposite of fossilization and, insensitive to social issues, bureaucracy.

New phenomena in this respect are euro-regions. Their creation in Europe is based on referring to common traditions and roots in societies wider than a region or a country. They are created across national borders – they integrate border people and concern controversial territories inhabited by national minorities. Euro-regions are created with the aim of searching for a new model of security and new mechanisms international cooperation. Euro-regions do not have any legal identity and their creation results from the initiative of local community at the grass-root level. Local agreements cannot contradict inner law; they do not abolish borders, but barriers between countries. They soothe conflicts and local nationalisms, and allow

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to get to know better the people living on the other side of a country border and encourage the development of frequently backward regions. Euro-regions do not aspire to eliminate national boundaries, but are just extensions of border cooperation by means of contracts established by local authorities, businessman, cooperation between universities, common undertakings (enterprises, roads, bridges, sewage treatment plants, regulations concerning fishing in border rivers etc.).

Euro-regions are created to redefine many social, political and economic values. This refers, among others, to the essence of European identity, which constitutes in acknowledgement of variety within the scope of territorial and civilization unity\(^\text{14}\). An important aspect of the redefinition process belongs to demographic issues, i.e. the role of borderland people in civilization transformations in Europe and worldwide. The following features typical of borderland people are emphasized: the ability to adjust to social, political and economic changes, ease of adaptation and assimilation to new civilization reality, openness, tolerance, multitude of cultures. Euro-regions are often created in areas sharing common historical traditions and in the areas of natural disasters. Regionalization, including the creation of euro-regions, is a crucial link that weakens central political power, at the same time strengthening the powers of self-governments and local authorities.

3. Local self-government takes a special place in social, political and economic reality of Poland\(^\text{15}\). This notion is used to describe specified by law range of competence allowing to make independent decisions concerning public administration as well as autonomy in performing certain political functions of administrative character\(^\text{16}\).

In the history of Poland, self-government was often faced with civilization tasks, such as triggering initiative, encouraging local governments to take action, inspire the Polish nation to rebuild the Polish statehood with its own example and good work organization. Self-government was supposed to set example to organize economic and cultural life, ruthlessly fight apathy to replace it with social activism, bind local centers to become a single whole\(^\text{17}\).

The ideas of self-government have been known and implemented in Poland since the very beginnings of Polish statehood. However, its forms and range have been

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\(^{16}\) C.f. Słownik samorządu terytorialnego..., p. 185–193.

changing throughout centuries. In the Middle Ages, since the second half of the XII century, these ideas were shaped in the mould of the regional division of Poland: the Pomerania of Gdańsk, Mazovia, Malopolska, Silesia, Great Poland and Eastern Pomerania. There were further regional divisions within this general one. The links among all these regions were the following factors: 1. common language, 2. the common name of the state – Polonia (Poland), 3. homeland common for all, 4. economic exchange among the particular regions, 5. one single dynasty of Piast, 6. one single church organization (the archbishopric of Gniezno), 7. Cracovia as the symbolic capital of Poland, 8. reunions of regional dukes, during which important issues concerning foreign as well as domestic policy were discussed. These regions were not separate structures in the state, even though they were waging wars against one another. The national bond was strengthened by the awareness of being a part of a larger whole – Poland.

Regional separatist tendencies were very strong in the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century, which resulted from the policies of invaders. The separatist tendencies were particularly visible after regaining independence by Poland. Great problems with unification occurred at that time. They were expressed not only in the differences between the levels of economic development, or disappearance of bonds between lands belonging former to different invaders, but also in attitudes, political behaviour, and generally in Polish mentality.

After regaining independence, an important role in Poland was allocated to the development of self-government. It was believed that local government was the best method of social education, will-strengthening, creating awareness of statehood on one hand, and the gift of initiative and discipline on the other. In 1924, an economic program of regionalism development was created. It assumed a policy of eliminating the difference in the levels of economic development. Regional activists were supposed to become the initiators implementing this program, as well as the state and the institutions of economic and executive character. This idea was propagated through the motto “each province – equal opportunities for development”.

In the policy of regionalism, great importance was attached to mental issues. The policy assumed contribution to improving the level of social, intellectual and moral life of society. The economic rebuilding was supposed to go along with scientific

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achievements, and the development of science was particularly emphasized in the provinces. There were attempts to involve universities in this process. They were responsible for organizing scientific sessions on the regional level, which would be attended by both scientists and self-government and local activists. There was also an initiative of establishing popular local universities with curricula that would cover regional scientific problems as well as economic and social issues.

The regional movement was widely accepted in vast social areas. It grew significantly, to a large extent contributing to inspiring social activities, which was crucial for shaping local awareness and Polish national and statehood rights. In this respect, educational institutions played an important role. In 1926, a program of Polish regionalism was published on the pages of "Polish out-of-school education". Its assumptions indicate that:

1. the balance between the state authority, citizens' freedom, local interests and the needs of the whole constitute the basis for the state unity,
2. unlimited freedom of material, spiritual, individual and territorial development of Polish lands (regions) is the basis for regional work division, inspires creative social energy, and protects national cultural heritage,

The aspect of economic life assumed that:

1. each Polish land (region) should have its own kind of economic management that would correspond to the natural and cultural requirements of a given region,
2. regionalism coordinates, awakens initiative, makes communities socially aware of:
   a. scientific research and the establishment of territorially individualized economic problems,
   b. work on improving the level of individual or regional farms,
   c. regionalism striving for the implementation of its postulates through organizing local associations, influencing social opinion and professional preparation of people involved the activities of general and economic self-government.

This sphere also includes trade associations and community movement.

The aspect of social life assumed that:

1. regionalism aspires to shape such an administrative state that would ensure the development necessary to cultivate individual economic and cultural values of particular regions,
2. the wide cooperation between self-government and public administration should encompass all tasks crucial for the development of identity of local, economic and cultural centers,
3. regionalism aims to provide public administration with individualized legal regulations that would be adjusted to local needs.
This program devoted most attention to cultural life. It indicated that:
1. social and cultural works which is adjusted to the local ethnic, physiographic, social and economic conditions should constantly be in organizational connection with scientific research into these conditions,
2. the bases for close cooperation between regional life and science are local museums in physiographic, historical and economic centers. Local museums are scientific posts and institutions of educational and social work. As such, local museums coordinate the activities of all associations existing in a given area and organizations of all kinds, trying to preserve their complete autonomy for the benefit of cooperating towards one common aim: becoming familiar with history, values and conditions for development of particular parts of Poland,
3. a region aims to closely connect educational work in school and work done out of school with its own environment. This can be achieved by means of regionalization of all subjects that are taught,
4. regionalism in literature consists in indepth depiction of human soul against the background of a person's closest environment,
5. regionalism in the theatre should aspire to uncover legends, tales, stories, ballads, folk and fairy tales, etc and to restore artistic works, and particularly cultural organizations, through folk theatre,
6. regionalism helps the art and architecture to fully appreciate the variety of topics, themes and techniques that local folk art and home-grown historical art possesses,
7. musical regionalism takes great care of musical ethnography, trying to popularize folk music as widely as possible; this is the basis for making the nation more sensitive to its national musical heritage,
8. regional press is expected to reflect all aspects of life in its local environment, inspire attachment and interest in everything that happens in the nearest neighborhood, inspire energetic actions and initiative, guard the abilities to perform one's duties by each citizen.

The ideas of regionalism become popular after the Second World War. This happened immediately after completing warring actions, when the problem of territorial integration occurred; it was connected with borderline changes, and especially with the issue of regaining the old land of Piasts which got under strong German influence in 19th and at the beginning of 20th century. There was a strong urge to prove that these territories are emotionally Polish; regionalism was assigned a new task in this respect, the essence of which was to prove Polish character of the so-called Regained Land; many mistakes and
distortions occurred during this process; it was only after 1957, that is after indepth scientific research was initiated\textsuperscript{21}, that attempts to correct these distortions were made.

After the Second World War, regionalism was limited mostly to scientific and cultural spheres. Other areas of its functioning were limited by the central policy of the state. Changes in this respect started after 8\textsuperscript{th} of March 1989, when a bill concerning local self-government was passed, which initiated a complex process of restoring the institution of local self-government. The restoration of self-government structures and equipping them with a set of appropriate competence proved to be a very difficult task\textsuperscript{22}. It required a thorough rebuilding of internal structures of the state, defining precisely relations between the organs of state and self-government administration, equipping the latter not only with a set of appropriate competence and tasks but also with material means necessary for task realization (communal means, community finances), and, at last, making the inhabitants realize that they have the right to decide about certain issues themselves.

The issue of the state regionalization became a subject of hot discussions. Many various concepts regarding territorial division of the country appeared, accompanied by assumptions of their functioning\textsuperscript{23}. Currently, discussions about solutions concerning local self-government are still being carried. It is widely believed that activating local environment is a challenge which cannot be ignored on the way to civilization transformation of the state. The need for further development of regional movement is indicated, along with activating local environment and self-governments.

4. The changes of the modern world, including state transformations in Poland and the countries of Middle and Eastern Europe are accompanied by the awareness of inevitability of deep civilization changes. It can easily be noticed that the majority rule, which was underlying the political life, including social, political and economic phenomena and processes of the last centuries, is becoming more and more obsolete. The tendency for minorities to gain significance will eventually have to be reflected in political life of a state. The interest in mass production, mass consumption, mass communication and education is gradually decreasing. Diversity is becoming an inseparable feature of today’s world, which is gaining its own determined supporters who point out that the rule of majority aimed to realize the rules of social justice, serve the poor, whilst the minority tendencies create the basis for social selfishness.

and lead to various social conflicts. The supporters of the minority rule claim that all negative phenomena occurring during transformations are merely a passing phase, and that they resulted from the failure to create such political institutions that would be able to tackle the problems of civilization transformations.

The factor which is strengthening the essence of local self-government is the rule of “half-indirect democracy”, that is such that instead of appointing representatives, would take over their duties of interest representation. The chosen representatives are less and less familiar with the issues that they are to discuss, therefore they need to refer to experts for opinion. Those directly involved in the issues could well assume the roles of experts. In order to make the process of decision-making free of emotional bias, the computer technology could be used – not only it is objective but also it gives citizens feedback on their participation in political life, and in particular on their decision-making.

In the creation process of a new autonomous society, in times of power decentralization, development of self-government organizations, spontaneous people collecting into groups, participative democracy, the weakening of state identity for the benefit of local bonds, new values are appearing, among which there are the following: the superiority of human rights over state legislative, global awareness, looking into the future, believing in progress, tolerance of different systems of values, increase of social aspirations, replacing the philosophy of ruling (over the natural world, state, human being) with the idea of co-existence and partnership in harmony.

In drawing the picture of social, political and economic relations, with decentralization and globalization co-existing with each other both in internal relations and in international policy, the prime mover is defined by the rate of scientific and technical progress; knowledge and information it entails is the most expensive “goods” and the basic condition of development; there is a need for constant changes in the educational system, a need for continuous, interdisciplinary education, openness to innovations.

In economy, withdrawal from massiveness is supposed to serve well-being. The basic aim of economizing is to be the elimination of developmental barriers, while state should act as the coordinator of development processes. Decentralized management is becoming a typical phenomenon (network organizational structures, participative management).

In general, the withdrawal from massive society can be claimed to be a rule characterizing the process of civilization transformations. The conflicts that occur on the transformation road from centralized political structures to decentralized ones are also a rule typical of social, political and economic changes. There is a variety of opinions and judgements concerning the undergoing changes. There is an optimistic opinion that this is a process leading to a higher stage of human develop-
ment, however, some also think that civilization has already reached its peak, and any further stages can only be regressive, leading to an eventual fall. This is a catastrophic view. An opinion about a cyclical development of civilization is often heard as well, and in it, decentralization succeeds centralization, and this process repeats itself as do other phenomena\textsuperscript{24}.

Looking into the sources of transformations connected with economic management and exercising political and social power, it can be seen that they are determined by the development of science and technology. In their entirety, these transformations have various connections, relations, links. Contemporary world created by globalization and decentralization at the same time, is an arena of openness towards the achievements and values of other nations and countries, as well as towards the ideas of freedom, tolerance and human solidarity. In this respect, it seems to be a rule to limit sovereignty, on one hand, for the benefit of self-government institutions and local groups, but on the other, it is also a rule to limit sovereignty for the benefit of international institutions and regulations, i.e. those that protect human rights. The new awareness that is being shaped, along with the humanization of interpersonal relations, should encourage replacement of forceful argumentation with free and fully conscious choice\textsuperscript{25}.


\textsuperscript{25} A. Piskozub, Przemiany kulturowe i cywilizacyjne w perspektywie społeczeństwa postindustrialnego i aspekty globalizacji kulturowej – uwarunkowania i wnioski, [in:] Polska na drodze do nowoczesnej cywilizacji, Warszawa 1990, vol. II, p. 3.