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THINKING THE FAMILY:
INSTITUTIONALISM VERSUS GLOBALISM.
THEORETICAL CLARITY,
STRANGE DEVELOPMENTS & HUGE PROBLEMS

Summary: This text intends to show: First: There is no theoretical unclarity surrounding the notion of the family. Taken together, its definition in Aristotle and St. Augustine is, as it were: perfect, intellectually completely satisfying. One could even go so far as to say that this is a truth universally acknowledged among those familiar with the subject. This is recapitulated with a special stress on theoretical stringency. However, there seem to be many cultured despisers of the family. The force of the zeitgeist runs strong here, and it will not simply go away. Strange developments lead to huge problems surrounding and resulting from social atomism, anti-institutionalistic and globalistic concepts. This is developed ex negativo, against the background of robust institutionalism. Jürgen Habermas' destructive universalism e.g. can be understood via a concentration on Arnold Gehlen's institution-theory.

The text tries to lead to insight into this syllogism: Man is institutionalist by nature. Globalism or internationalism is intrinsically anti-institutionalist. Globalism or internationalism therefore directly leads to the abolition of man.

But, finally: Of course all this can be overcome. The way to transcend the zeitgeist-tendencies is the only necessary institution, the family. The family liberates practically, and it clarifies theoretically.

Keywords: institutionalism, globalism, family, natural law, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Arnold Gehlen, Jürgen Habermas.

I.) The Family: A Theoretically Crystal Clear Reality

I.1.) Aristotle: Natural Law and the Family

I start with the simple fact that marriage and family are realities within pre-positive, within natural law. So these are not things that have come into existence contingently, for biological, psychological, sociological or whatever reasons. They exist for natural law reasons.

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Now, natural law is obviously a basic theme of our tradition. Without pre-political, pre-positive rights, it does not appear to be possible that there are any rights in a strict sense at all. (Wladika, 2015) At least no right to rights. Any right or human right based exclusively on convention is built on sand and is lost on the spur of the moment, according to the existing and anyway always shaky propaganda-equilibrium.

Naturalism, conventionalism and positivism are therefore intellectually inferior and substandard. It can e.g. up to a certain degree be understood and also historically explained that an instructive author (instructive in some respects, that is) like Hannah Arendt does not want to conceptualize her human rights as pre-political natural law, for the reason that this would seem to presuppose „that nature is less alien to the essence of man than history”¹. (Arendt, 1991, p. 464) But for us, nature, as well as the essence of human being, has become ‘alien’ and ‘uncanny’. Perhaps this is understandable. Nevertheless it is wrong. If the essence of man is illegible, then neither he nor rights exist anymore.

How do we get to a level of pre-positive rights, claims, and practically relevant types of goodness, e.g. families?

Every classical theory of ethics – Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas – starts by looking at human nature, at ‘*humanitas*’. (Wladika, 2019) Human beings are beings of a certain nature, a certain *physis resp. natura*. Many things and aspects are included in this. To develop them adequately, so that actuality corresponds to essence, is man’s calling and purpose. It is actually, by the way, impossible to evade this line of thinking, as esp. the movement of existentialism has proved, *malgré lui*. Because man is a rational animal, *animal rationale* (Aristotle, Politics I 2 1253a10) – the first definition of man –, therefore he should actualize thinking. Ethics develops what is as what it should be. The should lies in the is.

Because man is rational, he should diligently think. An inference that leads from being to necessity, obligation or task. Something that is called a ‘naturalistic fallacy’ (George Edward Moore) (Moore, 1903, passim) or also an ‘is-ought-problem’ (David Hume). (Hume, 1740, III I 1) But it is no fallacy, and this for the reason that the nature of man here, in classic theory, is not interpreted as pure, neutral fact, but finalistically. Facticity is a recent invention and is inherently wrong.

There is no being without a tendency towards actualization, nothing that should not be something. What is, should be what it is according to its nature. Man is not only there, nihilistically, but there is also something he should be. The mission comes with the being.

So ethics develops what is as what it should be.

¹ All translations of texts originally in Ancient Greek or German in this paper are my own.

As for goodness, say: excellence of character, “we start with a capacity for it, but this has to be developed by practice”. (Ross, 1995, p. 200) How do we e.g. acquire the virtue of justice? Aristotle: “We become just by doing just actions [τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα]”. (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics II 1 1103b1)

This is very true. But there seems to be circular thinking here: Just actions spring from habit. And this habit has been formed by just actions². If this is not to be circular, two qualifications are necessary: We need a) a strong understanding of the difference between capacity and actuality. Capacity is there prior to the acts, actuality only after a long series of them³. But b) this nevertheless presupposes already actually existing justice from which just acts flow. In other words: Justice is acquired by education only. This is the virtue-theory-aspect of the definition of man as a social animal.

Man is the ζῷον πολιτικόν, animal sociale – the second definition of man. (Aristotle, Politics I 2 1253a2 & III 6 1278b20 and Nicomachean Ethics IX 9 1169b18-20) He cannot actualize his nature without community. Herein lies the first, natural, most fundamental form of community, marriage directed towards the family, so towards the self-actualization of man not as an isolated individual, something that he never is.

I.2.) Aristotle: Procreation and House

It is helpful to look at what procreation is, γέννησις, generatio. Aristotle defines generatio as ‘origo viventis a principio vivente coniuncto in similitudinem naturae’, as ‘origin or beginning of a living being from a living being, these being combined in the uniformity of nature’. (Aristotle, De anima II 4 and Metaphysics VII 7)⁴

Procreation as such tells us already that we, as living beings, as human beings, are not self-sufficient, self-producing, autonomous etc. Something we should ponder.

“First, then, there must of necessity be a conjoining of persons who cannot exist without one another, female and male, for the sake of reproduction. – ἀνάγκη δὴ πρῶτον συνδυάζεσθαι τοὺς ἄνευ ἀλλήλων μὴ δυναμένους εἶναι, οἷον θῆλυ μὲν καὶ ἄρρεν τῆς γενέσεως ἔνεκεν”. (Aristotle, Politics I 2 1252a25 ff)

Why is there a drive towards procreation? An inclinatio naturalis. Aristotle again:

² This is so not for justice only, but for all virtues of character. Aristotle mentions directly following on the passage just quoted also temperance and courage.

³ Aristotle has of course a huge amount of things to say about this long, long series; I would perhaps like to point esp. to book VIII of the Politics here. Very valuable advice, to be pondered.

⁴ It is necessary to combine these texts.

“For this is the most natural of all functions among living creatures ..., viz., to reproduce one’s kind. – φυσικώτατον γὰρ τῶν ἔργων τοῖς ζῶσιν ..., τὸ ποιῆσαι ἕτερον οἶον αὐτό”. (Aristotle, *De anima* II 4 415a26 ff)

Already from the point of view of natural philosophy, procreation is what most corresponds to nature. This is so because the conservation of self and species are so closely connected for any non-nominalist⁵. The individual living being is only due to procreation; being directed against the conservation of species, it is therefore directed against itself. But Aristotle says more:

“[The living creatures have this drive towards reproduction,] in order that they may have a share in the immortal and divine in the only way they can; for every creature strives for this, and for the sake of this performs all its natural functions. (...) Since, then, they cannot share in the immortal and divine by continuity of existence (...), what persists is not the individual itself, but something in its image, identical not numerically but specifically”. (Aristotle, *De anima* II 4 415a28-b7)

This is what corresponds to nature from the point of view of metaphysics. No being without a tendency towards self-actualization. So procreation is contingent neither from the point of view of physics nor from metaphysics; so it is not contingent at all. How is this related to the notion of the family?

Aristotle has a very strong theory of the house, οἶκος. It is grounded on the one side in his grasping of man as a social animal and on the other in aspects of his teaching about reason and will. Rational beings naturally do not strive for the immediate, obvious, short-hand good only, but for the final good, actualizing human life on a level of excellence. Otherwise, we would be reduced to mere desire and instinct. The actualization of human life, therefore, includes the stable order of the house / the family and the education of the children.

“For human beings form couples more naturally than they form cities, to the extent that the household is prior to the city and more necessary, and childbearing is shared more widely among the animals. For the other animals, the community goes only as far as childbearing. Human beings, however, share a household not only for childbearing but also for living itself [living in human community as such]. – ἄνθρωπος γὰρ τῇ φύσει συνδυαστικὸν μᾶλλον ἢ πολιτικόν, ὅσῳ πρότερον καὶ ἀναγκαϊότερον οἰκία πόλεως, καὶ τεκνοποιία κοινότερον τοῖς ζῴοις. τοῖς μὲν οὖν ἄλλοις ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡ κοινωνία ἐστίν, οἱ δ’ ἄνθρωποι οὐ μόνον τῆς τεκνοποιίας χάριν συνοικοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν εἰς τὸν βίον”. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII 14 1162a17 ff)

⁵ Again, it is at least helpful to combine or rather to see Aristotle, *De anima* II 4, against the background of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.

I.3.) St. Augustine: The Ends of Marriage

I add briefly: St. Augustine develops a doctrine, the doctrine regarding the ends of marriage: proles: procreation and education of children, fides: fidelity, sacramentum: indissolubility and everything that makes marriage a sign and image of the connectedness between Christ and the Church. (St. Augustine, *De bono coniugali* 24, 32; *De sancta virginitate* 12, 12; *Retractationes* II 22, 48)

St. Augustine links the sacramental meaning of marriage with topics of salvation history. This makes it impossible that the following two things would be completely disconnected: We are meant to be good in the way in which we can be so in this world. And this world, it is not nothing. Because it is creation, and marriage belongs to the creation order. Therefore it belongs to the kind of goodness that is possible for us in this world. But we cannot in this world be as good as we are finally meant to be. Our felicity lies in the end in God Himself, not in anything that we could experience down here and now. And so, we stand in need of life-modes that make us deiform, conforming to God Himself. Marriage, insofar as it is a sign and image, belongs with these. Both sides do not fall apart⁶.

Marriage is an institution that is of transcendence-relevance. This is the addition that I take in this paper out of St. Augustine's extremely rich teaching⁷.

II.) Globalism: The Destruction of the Institutions

II.1.) Background

Modern secular man sees himself as emancipated from God and from his neighbour. Modern secular man wants to be like God, to be God, *desertione, non participatione*. (St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXII 30) Human autonomism is therefore inhuman. It is accompanied by certain problems.

One of the foremost of these is what I call the destruction of the institutions. Why is this a problem?

As we have already seen, there are no excellences of character, no virtues, no human living outside ways of life and there are no ways of life without ordered We-s, i.e., without community-structuring institutions and stable ways of proper conduct.

Modern times concepts in ethics on the other hand, start with alienation-results, isolation- and dualism-products. They are interesting enough at that.

⁶ For more on this, also for further developments see Davies, 1992, p. 227–249.

⁷ Esp. St. Augustine: *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* needs to be added to the texts already mentioned, so important also because St. Augustine here shows, in this anti-pelagian text, how his teaching about marriage is neither pelagian nor manichean. It is exactly these two temptations, manichean dualism and pelagian relative naturalism, that need to be overcome in this field.

But they start with irreality, so hypothetically. They start with an I without Being, to point to Kant and Fichte as by far the strongest icons of modern times thinking as such. (Wladika, 2008) If this development is not transcended, not re-integrated into a both evaluative and descriptive account of human practice, then its results need to be disappointments, disillusionments, and more: regress, destruction.

I want to exemplify this a bit, looking at, I think, exemplary intellectuals: Arnold Gehlen standing for extreme institutionalism, being indispensable, and Jürgen Habermas standing for globalism and therefore destruction. So I take Gehlen to briefly show what we need in the background and Habermas to show what we get instead.

II.2.) Arnold Gehlen: Institutionalism

One could say that Gehlen instantiates, almost alone in the 20th century, extreme institutionalism. I look at his philosophy of institutions (Gehlen, 1956; see Wladika, 2013) as background for the destructive globalism or internationalism to be described in a bit more detail then.

Human beings are not without a ‘second nature’⁸. Stabilizing human life means institutionalizing. Habitualized human activity, as soon as it is there in a sufficiently culturalized, objective way, challenges us. Institutions bring norms, and they bring meaning, end, *telos*. They not only make life possible but make it rich. Otherwise, our ideas and plans stay potential, arbitrary, ephemeral and not lived. This is what happens to self-centered individuals.

There is another problem with self-centeredness, a theoretical one: How do we arrive at self-understanding? Direct introspection is impossible⁹. Thus indirectly: We understand ourselves in and via our objects, in distanced, qualified identification, briefly: via representation. In representing something, we do not change it but identify ourselves with it. Thus we meet ourselves in the object. Thus we can understand ourselves.

Man is the imitating, the representing living being. (Aristotle, Poetics 4 1448b4 ff) Gehlen, being wonderfully precise:

“Ritualistic-representing behaviour does no longer, as all other human activity, intend any change in its object, exactly because its content is its object’s being. [Das rituell-darstellende Verhalten geht nicht mehr, wie sonst jedes menschliche Handeln, auf eine Veränderung des Gegenstandes, gerade weil sein Inhalt das Sein desselben ist]”. (Gehlen, 2004, p. 16)

⁸ Here one could look also into already the early, the first great book by Gehlen: *Der Mensch, seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt* (Berlin 1940), regarding topics like the relative absence of instincts and definitively given environment in man.

⁹ Perhaps Plato is the first human being who wrote this down: Alcibiades 132e–133c.

And it is here that the institutions lie, can be understood and are born.

Without things that are grasped as ends in themselves, this central aspect cannot be understood, namely that we act and think from within institutions. Without them, the institutions' binding force is unintelligible. I do not know many people who understand this: 'institutions' binding force'.

With Gehlen, this is possible: Imitating rites and habits are formations of institutions. Via imitation and repetition, we commit ourselves to final ends.

Institutions are liberating, and this is exactly and only because of their obligation-quality. Otherwise, we could never count on them, rely on them. Otherwise, we were not free. Freedom lies in necessity.

II.3.) Jürgen Habermas: Globalism

Habermas wrote two highly illuminating papers concentrating on Gehlen, "Der Zerfall der Institutionen" (1956), discussing the book *Urmensch und Spätkultur*, and "Nachgeahmte Substantialität" (1970), discussing the book *Moral und Hypermoral*.

Habermas seems to see that arbitrary subjectivity in opposition, revolt, whatever, against institutionalizing is empty. But:

"If this state of affairs is open to criticism, then with regard to a balanced mediation of institution and individual, not in relation to a liquidation of the one through the other, to the renaissance of the institutional via regression of the individual. [Wenn schon dieser Zustand kritikwürdig ist, dann im Hinblick auf eine balancierte Vermittlung von Institution und Individuum, nicht in Richtung auf die Liquidation des einen durch das andere, auf die Renaissance des Institutionellen durch Regression des Individuellen]". (Habermas, 1998a, p. 106)

Balanced mediation. Where could this exist? In indeterminate discussion? But this is exactly the chronic ego-concentration that institutionalizing is meant to complete and trans-cend. In the family? It seems to be exactly this: balanced mediation.

Gehlen is, according to Habermas¹⁰, "the most consistent thinker of anti-enlightenment institutionalism [der konsequenteste Denker eines gegen aufklärerischen Institutionalismus]" (Habermas, 1998b, p. 107) Universalistic morals as such cannot be lived, are therefore self-contradictory, in so far as morals are always elements of practice. Habermas:

"At the point that can, very provisionally, be denoted with the name Kant, the logic of the development of moral consciousness unveils itself. As long as

¹⁰ One could compare Herbert Schnädelbach's judgements here, agreeing in important parts in description, disagreeing in equally important parts in evaluation; see Schnädelbach, 1986. But then Schnädelbach's position in the intellectual world differs from Habermas' in an interesting way anyway.

universalizing and internalizing are not yet complete, a global interpretation including both nature and society is necessary. It both defines the scope of the system of norms and determines and justifies the behaviour-controlling, externally stabilizing and sanctioning instances. Both of these functions become superfluous as soon as morals have become universalistic and according to their nature demand complete internalizing. [An diesem sehr provisorisch mit dem Namen Kant bezeichneten Punkt enthüllt sich die Logik der Entwicklung des moralischen Bewusstseins. Solange Universalisierung und Internalisierung noch nicht vollständig sind, bedarf es einer Natur und Gesellschaft umgreifenden Globalinterpretation, die sowohl den Geltungsbereich des Normensystems abgrenzt als auch die verhaltenskontrollierenden, nämlich von außen stützenden und sanktionierenden Instanzen festlegt und rechtfertigt. Diese beiden Funktionen werden überflüssig, sobald die Moral universalistisch geworden ist und ihrem Begriffe nach vollständige Internalisierung verlangt]. (Habermas, 1998b, p. 114)

Of course, looking back, everything is easier. We have seen many experiments by now. But it is difficult to avoid laughing. It is very helpful to read a text like this¹¹.

Habermas: These two aspects of ‘universalistic morals’ need to be brought together: “individuality of the individual and universal validity of norms [Individualität des Einzelnen und universale Geltung der Normen]”. (Habermas, 1998b, p. 115) How?

“They stand in need of mediation via discourse, namely a public process of will-formation which is bound to the principle of unrestricted communication and freely reached consensus. [Sie bedürfen der Vermittlung durch Diskurs, nämlich durch einen öffentlichen Prozeß der Willensbildung, der an das Prinzip uneingeschränkter Kommunikation und herrschaftsfrei erzielten Konsensus gebunden ist]”. (Habermas, 1998b, p. 115 f)

This destroys everything. At least all institutions. It is extremely socially atomistic, and it especially presupposes the destruction, in the end, of all institutions (‘uneingeschränkt’). It is, of course, also self-contradictory if meant to be real: The principle of unlimited communication can exist only if institutionalized, so if limited.

III.) The Family Again: Transcending the Strange Developments and Silly Lies

We saw at the beginning: Law, right, justice, goodness, and community, all of this is grounded in nature. If not, let’s face it, it is just absolutely arbitrary, fictitious.

¹¹ One could compare the balanced discussion of such points in Schluchter, 1996.

So any ordering of human relations meaningfully, also everything that belongs to the government, only makes sense starting with our awareness of human beings as such. If, e.g. the very definition of a human is intended to depend on the 'positive law' fashioned by 'judges' and 'legislators', then this is, of course, necessarily without any standards of truth outside the positive law by which that positive law may be measured¹².

What happens then is that we are back in power-play only. It's the time of the loud-mouths again; so uncivilized.

Truth is different. This is completely coherent: The whole of humanity forms a quasi-political, natural legal community under the sovereignty of God, who, as the creator of nature and mankind, is the authority of natural legal determinations whose lawgiver He is.

"It is not at all clear that 'human rights' as currently understood can make any sense if deprived of this metaphysical foundation". (McCabe, 2008, p. 156)

I think it is rather clear that they do not make sense.

What is certainly clear is that those doing mentally away with God and nature have no standing at all regarding rights, duties, calls for 'respect', speaking against so-called 'discrimination' or whatever. So, denying the possibility of reading intentions, missions, and meanings in both God's mind and in nature and human nature makes it intellectually impossible to argue in the field of ethics and politics, so in the field of practice¹³. Therefore, we see no arguing any more. Commands are being shouted. It is time for the bullies again; they are so uncivilized.

We saw then: Man seems to be institutionalistic to the core.

Marriage and family are forms, non-arbitrary forms. So they are culturally demanding. So demanding that they transport unconditional standards, an unconditional tendency towards knowledge and form determining all culture and tradition. We want to get in shape in thinking, speaking and acting, and not stay and live around just somehow, arbitrarily. The non-committal is formless. Our time is not in shape.

This has the necessary consequence that I call 'the silly lies'.

Whenever cheapening is promoted, whenever superficial desires and opinions are praised¹⁴, whenever the level is lowered, then there is a disconcerting thing: the comparison with yesterday. To get rid of uneasiness there, it is necessary to unify, to do away with differences, clear distinctions, and discriminations.

¹² There is perhaps nothing better on this than Plato, Republic I and II.

¹³ Benedict XVIth Regensburg Lecture in 2006 and his Speech to the German parliament in 2011 are very helpful here.

¹⁴ Here, there is – though also Machiavelli has written so strongly on flattery – perhaps nothing better to read than Socrates' speech on this topic in: Plato, Gorgias 464b–466a.

To glance at a few of the very strange developments:

The unnatural sins are obviously always directed against God as the creator of nature and against human nature in whoever, and it does not seem to be too difficult to know what the telos of sexuality is. But, well, you see, these are just different preferences.

Everybody knows it's a lie.

It does not seem to be too difficult to know that as male and female He created us. But, well, you see: There is also 'same-sex marriage'.

Everybody knows it's a lie.

It does not seem to be too difficult to know that artificial contraception is not a just perfectly natural thing. But, well, you see: Even so-called 'partial-birth abortion' is not a euphemism.

Everybody knows it's a lie.

These propaganda-inventions, have their primal source far beyond them. Politicians and journalists never have any power that is not given to them. Their source is a solitary man revolving, circling autonomously around himself. Corresponding to this absence of reality and the world, we get what I wanted to describe with the mainstream media-pampered example of Habermas: globalism. It's the same empty thing, universalized, spread out over the world.

Conclusion

Globalism stands exactly for unmediated universality. Everybody can see by now that globalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism, that these things are primitivizing, successively infantilizing man¹⁵, the multi-cultural being regularly the anti-cultural.

I spoke of a syllogism at the beginning:

Man is institutional by nature. Globalism or internationalism is intrinsically anti-institutional. Globalism or internationalism, therefore, directly leads to the abolition of man.

Globalism destroys everything – it is in favour of mathematical equality and possibility. It is, therefore, directed against order and reality. But it is only structured *ordo amoris* that can make people want and act. (Spaemann, 1989, p. 141–156)

Universalism, then also in our present-day form of virtualism, brings close what is far away and distances what is close. It neutralizes. Universalism,

¹⁵ This is the situation in which the many so-called doctors and hospitals and lawyers and court houses spring up and are being promoted. Nothing more precise and aptly cynical on it than Plato: Republic III 405a ff.

practically directly, without mediation, actualized, has these consequences: the destruction of solidarity, dulling, and resignation. It derealizes.

But, finally, of course, all this can be overcome. The way to transcend the zeitgeist-tendencies is the only necessary institution, the family. The family liberates practically, and it clarifies theoretically.

Without transcending autonomism, without relativizing oneself concretely, human beings are impossible. Relativizing oneself refers to past and future – and much more – also to tradition and procreation, parents and children. Both of these exist in a more than arbitrary way on this earth only within the family. There is nothing independent outside of it.

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Myślenie o rodzinie: instytucjonalizm kontra globalizm. Teoretyczna jasność, dziwny rozwój i ogromne problemy

Streszczenie: W niniejszym tekście starano się ukazać, że nie ma teoretycznej niejasności wokół pojęcia rodziny. Podkreślają to zarówno Arystoteles, jak i Augustyn. Można nawet posunąć się do stwierdzenia, że jest to prawda powszechnie uznawana wśród tych, którzy wiedzą, o czym mówią. Jest to rekapitulacja ze szczególnym naciskiem na teoretyczną surowość. A dalej: wydaje się, że jest wiele kulturowej pogardy dla rodziny. Duch czasu działa tu silnie i tak po prostu nie zniknie. Dziwne wydarzenia prowadzą do ogromnych problemów, które wynikają z atomizmu społecznego, koncepcji antyinstytucjonalistycznych i globalistycznych oraz skupiają się na nich. Rozwija się to *ex negativo* na tle solidnego instytucjonalizmu. Na przykład destrukcyjny uniwersalizm Jürgena Habermasa można zrozumieć poprzez skoncentrowanie się na teorii instytucji Arnolda Gehlena.

Autor stara się doprowadzić do wglądu w następujący sylogizm: Człowiek jest z natury instytucjonalistyczny. Globalizm lub internacjonalizm jest wewnętrznie antyinstytucjonalny. Globalizm lub internacjonalizm prowadzi zatem bezpośrednio do likwidacji człowieka.

I na koniec: wszystko to można przezwyciężyć. Sposobem na przełamanie tendencji ducha czasu jest jedyna niezbędna instytucja – rodzina. Rodzina wyzwała się praktycznie, a wyjaśnia teoretycznie.

Słowa kluczowe: instytucjonalizm, globalizm, rodzina, prawo naturalne, Arystoteles, św. Augustyn, Arnold Gehlen, Jürgen Habermas.