

# Arkadiusz Wuwer

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"Europejski spór o człowieka  
Studium z antropologii politycznej" =  
"European Dispute over the Man A  
Study on Political Anthropology",  
Michał Gierycz, Warszawa 2016 :  
[recenzja]

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Ecumeny and Law 5, 299-301

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Michał GIERYCZ: *Europejski spór o człowieka*  
*Studium z antropologii politycznej*  
(European Dispute over the Man  
A Study on Political Anthropology). Warszawa:  
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Michał Gierycz has been researching interpenetration of politics and religion, institutions and values in Polish and European contexts for a long time with admirable precision. He is a lecturer at the Institute of Political Science at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (UKSW) and is a strong voice of the academic school in which one of the major research fields are political anthropology studies. Having already published two well received books, namely: *Christianity and the European Union. The role of religion in the European integration process* (2008) and *The role of Polish deputies to the European Parliament of the fourth term in shaping its politics in the area of axiology of human rights* (2010), this time the author presents results of his research into interpretation of the major European rules and values.

The starting point of the exemplary presentation is a statement that “if we were to make a list of issues being the subject of an intense contemporary public dispute, ethical issues would undoubtedly be at the top of it. Ranging from abortion, in vitro fertilization and debates over euthanasia [...] Europe has been the stage of growing public debate” (from the Introduction). Since the European Union institutions have been active participants of the aforesaid debate, the fundamental values become the subject of public controversies, which proves that the scope of political debate is expanding. It has been gradually entering the realm regarded thus far as being outside of it, namely public morality and politics of morality. Politi-

zation intrudes into and replaces them. The said process of expanding what is politicized in the name of freedom and emancipation makes politics “the realm of omnipotence” and therefore, according to Gierycz, poses a threat for freedom freedom of an individual.

Due to these reasons the author believes that the meaning and consequences of debates on “the first principles” and “the major rules” carried out in Europe and the role of the European Union in this process is absolutely critical. Explaining the reasons for choosing the anthropological perspective for the analysis of aforementioned phenomena, Professor Gierycz presents two justifications: the negative one proving the limitations (“limited explicative value”) of analysing cultural tensions. The problem applies not only to a hierarchy of values, but goes even deeper — it refers to the very understanding of values and their practical implications. The second, this time positive justification shows that at the source of axiological tensions lies a dispute over the concept of man. Therefore, differences in understanding and prioritizing values are related to different anthropological standpoints; in the case of the reviewed book it is related to different concepts of man adopted by the European elites.

As a result of the extended research based on the original methodology and analysed in detail and illustrated by adequate and suggestive examples, Gierycz leads to the confrontation of two anthropological models — “unlimited” and “limited” anthropology and what follows “unlimited” and “limited” visions of society and politics. The first one is based on the assumption that human being can be perfect and reasonable and therefore capable of making autonomous and ideal choices. Hence what is good for a given society should be specified by elites which evaluate changes in progress in the best way and can say competently what the best political choice at a given moment is. The second “limited” anthropology admits that human being is erroneous both morally and intellectually. However, institutions, values, and cultural tradition of societies should impose restrictions on the scope of political choices in the name of subsidiarity and the common good. The right to make choices belongs therefore to every individual, not to elites. All decisions should be constantly verified by practice and efficiency of implementing the common good.

On the basis of principal documents of primary law (where both trends are present) and various EU institutions’ legislative practice (where the unlimited model is increasingly dominant), Gierycz leads his readers to the conclusion that since the end of the 1970s the attitude of the European elites to axiological issues has been undergoing a fundamental change. He calls it “the values reversal process.” According to the Author a gradual drifting away from interpretations in the discourse that go hand in hand with the natural law and the ancient and Christian moral tradition justified in

social utilitarianism, that is, by attempt to strengthen a legitimization of the European Union and its institutions (and its elites) as well as constructing the European identity in isolation from the traditional ties and national identities, was not successful. Dissociating oneself from interpretation of values align with the Christian tradition undermines the current foundation of the cultural cohesion in Europe.

Conclusions drawn from reading the book seem to be both optimistic and pessimistic. Introduction of new normative basis has been so far insufficient to build a sustainable social identity indispensable to implement the project of integrated Europe. Gradual disappearance of the European identity and renaissance of national identitarianism as well as strengthening trends to question normative interpretations promoted by the majority of the European elites and the European institutions poses a question on future of integration and the European identification and simultaneously opens new perspectives for research into the “limited” and “unlimited” anthropologies.

*Arkadiusz Wuwer*