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POLITOLOGY – BUT WHAT KIND OF?

One hears ever louder complaints concerning politology as an academic discipline, its identity crisis, methodological condition; critical statements concerning the subject of „the purity of politological research” are published. There also appear proposals to mend the ills, depicting the science of politics as „a discursive platform”, reaching for models known from American political science. Interesting proposals of new „sub-disciplines are promoted”, exemplified by „komunikowanie polityczne” (political communication) (Hofman 2006; Hudzik 2006; Mich 2006; Olszewski 2006).

If one wishes to discuss „politics”, one would first need to define the subject of one’s considerations. A practical piece of advice provided once by Gerard Labuda (born in 1916) could be of help here, who, basing on experience, came to the conclusion that in case of difficulties with absorbing „all of the implications resulting from the meanings of words that over their lifetime have undergone big changes, and that is usually the case with foreign borrowings to one’s native language, it is best to refer to the sources of the original word”. In the case of politics, as Professor Labuda explains it to us, this means the Greek word of *polis*, denoting „a community, multiplicity, as well as the city, a fortress and lastly, the state”. From that basic source there follow other related words, such as the adjective *politikos* meaning „typical of a citizen”, or „belonging to a community” and regarding „the governance of a community”, that is for example of a city or a state. That also includes meanings, such as „statesman or a leader capable of governing” a community. Moreover, to the same lexical family belongs also a „lexical compound”, as Labuda has it, of *politiké epistémē*, signifying „knowledge, skill, art of governing the community and the state”. From that basic noun there stems, in turn, a verb: *politeuo, politeuomai* meaning „to participate in the governance a community/state”, in the pas-

sive taking the form of: *politeuomai* „to be governed, to be subject to governance”. Therefore, the two terms: „to participate in governance”, to possess skills enabling governing, on the one hand, and „to be governed”, to have the capacity to govern the state, refer just as well to the adjective political (Labuda 2008: 252–253; Ryszka 1978: 11).

In view of such an understanding of „politics”, being in common usage, which is a product of the ancient culture, skeptical voices are heard. They say that the term and the concept as understood by Aristotle had a narrowly circumscribed meaning, referring to the care of few strictly enumerated matters, known by all, common to all citizens. An attempt to transfer the concept to another historical period, another culture, must necessarily result in interpreting the concept anew. Some shapeless explanation of the concept of „politics” is thus proposed that makes it difficult to define it in the context of „power” (Kaczorowski 2004: 1513–1514).

Similarly critical opinions were raised in some of the academic youth milieus that declared their allegiance to conservative, republican and anti-communist values. Those opinions are worthy of closer examination, primarily because they involve pre-meditated action.

At the end of 1995 in Vienna, two students met: Dariusz Gawin and Marek A. Cichocki. The first of them, as noted by a journalist, occupies currently the office of the Deputy Director of the Warsaw Uprising Museum and is the head of the Civil Society Unit at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). Cichocki is, in turn, an advisor to the President of the Polish Republic, being in charge of foreign policy issues and performing the role of the Polish negotiator of the Constitutional Treaty. The moment the two met coincided, as D. Gawin confessed to the journalist, with the moment of Aleksander Kwaśniewski’s victory: „my world collapsed. I had the impression that a dark night of postcommunism fell upon it. Our great hopes of 1989 vanished”. Then meetings in a group of other, similarly thinking young people followed. The young people were deeply anti-communist and anti-postcommunist, they were interested in philosophy and in addition cherished a conviction that it was worth it reading good books and have the same sense of humor. It was then that they came up with a saying „They have taken over the banks, we will write books on which their sons will be raised” (Janke 2007).

The group of the young graduates was organizationally and ideologically supported by Cracow’s Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej [The Centre

for Political Thought] that was established in 1992 as Towarzystwo Edukacyjno-Naukowe [Educational-Scientific Society]. As a matter of fact the majority of its young members belonged to the founders of the Society or its collaborators and represented a new view on „politics”.

At the same time another new concept started to circulate – that of so called political theology. It was enlisted in political theory or a doctrine „that claims the right to be based on the belief in God’s Revelation...”. The new term was derived from old ruminations of a German jurist, Carl Schmitt. This author did not define the concept of „politics” in itself as an entity on its own right but took it rather to have „an existential standing and character. As a matter of fact it is not important in itself as a linguistic category but rather as «the political» (*das Politische*) as being an existential feature of organized human communities, facing the constant choice between the friend and the enemy. The choice of one’s enemy and of one’s friend (ally) is a product and aim of the political decision. The decision depends of course on the «situated» reality (which is changeable) – the choice is thus premised on many circumstances but the decision is what creates the reality” (Ryszka 1992: 57; Kaczorowski 2004: 1513–1514).

From our point of view, both the scientific outlook on the issue of politics and the political and the ideological premises on which the journal „Teologia Polityczna” [Political Theology] was founded are interesting. The founders, the already mentioned Marek A. Cichocki and Dariusz Karłowicz, wrote that they wanted to create the first journal to represent in Poland an unknown in this country discipline that verges on philosophy, politics and theology. „On the political issues we want to look – we read in the first issue of the journal – from the perspective of ultimate issues” („Teologia Polityczna” 2003–2004).

If I gathered their idea correctly, the young people’s intention was to challenge the contemporary social sciences that were much tired by their „analytical sterility”. They wanted to let some fresh air to refresh „bad air”, too. This seems clear and interesting, not to say – necessary. Each new thought in the academic milieu is welcome if it begins discussions and debates. The authors declared that their view of the human being would be integral, that is at the same time taken from the vantage point of *homo politicus* and *homo religiosus*, a human being perceived in his/her „most fundamental dimensions, experiences and needs”. What was to express the idea of the so called political theology was this fresh outlook. The young reformers proposed to graft on the Polish ground a „new politology” that was bred by the philosophy of

politics and the German law. This thought was represented by two eminent German thinkers, the most prominent theologian of the post – Vaticanum II era, Johann Baptist Metz (born in 1928) and the already mentioned Carl Schmitt (1885–1985) – a classical politological author, a specialist in the field of the science of the state and international law, a theoretician of the authoritarian state. His concept of „political theology”, coined in the 1920s, had already been for long included in the scientific lexicons, provoking wide-ranging debates. Many a thick volume has already been written on the subject, essays and introductions to the works of that scholar, recommendations preceding the writings of that ideologue of the new politology (Kaczorowski 2004: 1411–1413).

Broadly defined, theological reflection has been always present in the Polish tradition. Ignoring it, it is difficult to comprehend not only the distant past but also our contemporary history on which the presence of the Church, and especially the Polish Pope, have made such a strong impact. Nonetheless, what may raise serious doubts is the philosophical grounding of the assumptions of that „political theology”. Its foundation is built without ever looking back at the Polish reflection on politics and religion. Each researcher, be him/her a historian of ideas, a philosopher of politics or a politologist, has the right to choose his/her viewpoint that is a right granted to a scholar – this is the source of his/her scholarly inspiration and motivation. However, it is difficult to understand the decision to reach for the principles of C. Schmitt rather than anyone else’s. Unless, one wanted to suggest to the reader that in Poland there had not been any vivid reflection on the perception of politics through the lenses of religion, the ultimate issues, social issues, the role of the Church in the life of the national community, problems of the spiritual and lay power, various models of representative legitimacy, diverse models of rationality. It is hard to believe that such a reflection was only developed in the so called free world.

And yet the political theology enthusiasts write that there were and there are no great thinkers in Poland because of the existence of the „political monopoly of Marxism, or more broadly conceived post-Enlightenment tradition that both acted in the role of envious state religions much supported by the lay arm of the state”. One has to be deprived of any respect for the indigenous thought to suggest to the reader that even if it is conceded that indeed there were such thinkers, they cultivated their discipline only „inadvertently”, pretending to be the proverbial Mr. Jourdain and hiding themselves not to be looked out by the „fortunately not very bright political censors”. This sounds like

words of contempt for the Polish independent religious and political thought, which are, moreover, being accused of servility to the „regime” and of forsaking their independence in the sphere of views (Szacki 1995; cf. Kurczewska 2008: 520).

It seems that the authors of the idea of „teologia polityczna” are lacking sincerity in their intentions. Those intentions must be a result of an erroneous diagnosis of the achievements and status quo of the Polish „political theology”, and, more broadly, of the Polish liberal arts (humanistic disciplines). A myth of the „victorious Marxism as a state religion” circulates in the „lounges” („salony”) and does not cease to torture us. And perhaps it would be of use to „fight” this myth, first of all? I encourage them to do just this but not by using a language of ideology as a tool or other such „anti-isms” but on the grounds of a substantial debate. Such a shape of the „neutral axiologism” appears also in the appeals made by the senior historians of ideas (Szacki 1997; cf. Walicki 2000: 271–290).

I look at the initiative of the young scholars not so much with surprise as with an embarrassment for it seemed to me that religion and politics, societal issues and the ultimate issues have always stimulated interest and have always been present in our academic life, in historical studies, in the Church’s history as a relevant element of the history of the national community. There is a lot of such knowledge in handbooks that focus on political and legal doctrines, thick volumes of the Polish political thought, publications of source materials, the very history of philosophy, starting from antiquity until the present time. If it only started from the Middle Ages, this would mean one thousand years of history in which the struggle for sovereign power, the primacy of lay power over religious authority was one of the dominant problems. Shall we start everything from the beginning? I am not the one to decide. Or maybe I do not gather the issue well. What is left to do is to wait patiently but at the same time to keenly watch the initiatives by such young, ambitious and hard-working scholars.

One might feel some envy seeing their courage, scale of ambitions and will but one might also feel afraid whether they will be able not to repeat the mistakes of the older generation. Do not go „too far expressing your own ideas and intellectual speculations”, do not draw political conclusions in order to „defend this or that political or ideological (or religious etc.) program under the guise of narrating history”. Remain neutral, „following solely what the sources tell you”, were the recom-

recommendations of a methodologist (Topolski 1983: 54). Alas, who wants to listen today to the advice given by the more experienced?

The exchange of views related to the „theological” issues is continued in the Internet, involving ever growing circles. New journals are created that have their readers. The so called historical politics became a bone of contention, provoking debates during meetings, conferences and celebration events (Rymkiewicz 2007).

I am not sure if this will have any impact on politology as a scientific discipline that has had a long – albeit, admittedly, complex history (Pasierb 2005: 105–119; 2006: 36–74). Personally, I do not invest any future hopes in the conception of such politology. Neither I am afraid that political philosophy, combined with „political theology” will fundamentally transform the shape of the Polish science of politics, although that will be decided by young and courageous scholars.

An anonymous „literary wannabe” [Grafoman] rightly noticed that in our country to be an „erudite in the period of the hyperlink is theoretically exceptionally easy. [...] Is it not naïve in such circumstances to believe that the traditional approach to education still does make sense...?” (Grafomanie 2008).

There should be no doubt that the way to become a true „erudite” leads through traditional and tried-out education. One should be receptive of interesting ideas, new initiatives if they aim at improvement of the image of Polish politology.

I will indicate only two examples of good and sound, in my view, work by „the craftsmen of politics”. One of them is a product of an individual effort, the other – of collective work. Both are rooted in traditional politology that has been cultivated in our country for more than a hundred years. We mean here a scientific discipline, one of the oldest in „the family of social-liberal (humanistic) disciplines” (Szymczak 1984: 300–301; Stawiński 2005: 205–206; Świeboda 2005: 206; Zawadzka 2005: 206). There are those who search for its roots in a distant past. Others are not concerned with this, just taking over the traditional name of the university studies while building everything else completely anew according to their preferences (*Dlaczego politologia*, 2009: Internet). Still others, including primarily the academic youth that has been educated at the university politological studies, are interested in its development and want ever growing social prestige for the discipline. They look back and ask questions: politology, but what kind of a discipline that is, what its intellectual lineage is? Where are its roots, what is its identity, in which contexts should it be developed to

the most, whose and what sister is it: of philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, anthropology? What should it be like in the future, what could one expect from it, these are only a few of the questions that are easy to come across once we type the keyword: politology in an Internet search machine (*Politologia – młodsza siostra historii?* 2009: Internet).

Being a historian of politics, I would like to start from an individual, perhaps even personal, example. One would probably be expected to feel happy seeing that in the time of wide-spread disgust for politics, there grow echelons of ever new graduates of this difficult discipline of science. Moreover, one could appreciate the still rare fact that a graduate of politology, MA and PhD in politology, a researcher representing the young generation, Mateusz Nieć, earned the privilege to become an „independent” politologist. What is more, he declared himself to be a follower of the genetic approach when presenting his work *O pojęciu polityki w kręgu kultury attyckiej* [On the notion of politics in the circle of the Attic culture] as a „historian of politics, a politological discipline which presents politics and not just political history, linking the political thought with reflection concerning political institutions and political practice”. He wrote that he did not deal with „systematization of the problem but with dynamics of transformation, so characteristic of history”. In his politological analysis he looked for „rules denoting the functioning of political society, the creation of political order, interpretations of human conduct independent of individual motivation but conditioned by political determinants (institutions, ideology)”.

In all this Mateusz Nieć is not a follower of political philosophy, he does not construct models, does not interpret the human conduct outside of its social contexts. His overarching motivation involves a conviction that politologists rarely „write works that belong to the history of politics, as they are most often interested in what is their contemporary, and so I hope to fill the emerging gap” (Nieć 2006: 20–21).

I am sharing with the readers the bold declaration made by this author with all the greater satisfaction that his work essentially does not only fill the gap but also opens up anew the rich Polish tradition of (humanistic) studies of politics, positing the history of politology in the row of fully legitimized politological disciplines (Rybicki 1963: 330). Words of respect should go to the author for his persistence and consistency. He had not been deterred by difficulties and vicissitudes of fate that had been piling up during his academic career. One should be very glad that in this case the academic milieu proved its autonomy and abi-

lity to be supportive and sensitive to other people's needs, and first of all that it recognized in the young man a researcher who wants to contribute something novel to the development of Polish politology. Or perhaps an opportunity to develop further the traditional research approach, that is known as **history of politics**. It is certain to create an opening for new courses, lectures, seminars and workshops that are focused on interpretations of texts written by political writers, programmatic documents created by political movements or doctrines, out of which politics is born and on the basis of which it defines its goals. It would not be reproachable at all if the milieu within which Mateusz Nieć has proved his research talents and didactic abilities, established, as the first in Poland, a **Chair of the History of Politology**. This would be a response to postulates voiced by the younger teaching staff who demands that changes be introduced while staffing new units by means of impartial, open competitions.

On the margin of the subject of the history of politology, it is worth recalling the fact that is not known commonly. It will be a contribution to the history of knowledge. Namely, the first chair of the history of science was established in 1892 at Collège de France, for the sake of a discipline for which Auguste Comte (1798–1857) in the middle of the 19th century could not secure a place in the academic curriculum (Amsterdamski 1991: 167). Although it was the first chair of the history of sociology and not of politology, its establishment paved the way for broader institutionalization of social sciences. If we accept the supposition that the conception of a new discipline ultimately crystallizes „only when the new science has earned its place in the university programs”, such a moment in the development of the Polish politology happened in 1902 within Lvov community. The first, private institution was established there that educated young people in the area of politics under the name of **Szkoła Nauk Politycznych** [School of Political Sciences] (Pasierb 2008: 282–292).

If an opportunity arises for an autonomous discipline – the history of politics – only time will tell. One thing is certain: footholds for the development of new scientific disciplines are sometimes created incidentally. Once again we confirm an old truth: in the academic career **scientific enquiry** always goes first, only then **knowledge**, and finally **teaching and education** (Mazur 1971).

The other example involves work authored by an experienced researcher who has been able to organize skillfully great team-work, gathering around his ideas scholars of various generations and motiva-

ting them to work. He originates from the good Poznań school of the promoters of positivist work which has produced so many eminent scholars, including the ones in the field of liberal arts, especially history. We mean here Professor Marcei Kosman (born on 8 May in 1940) who may be included in the circle of those who stimulate an interest in historical politology. Professor Kosman is well known and respected by historians, believed to be a man of many scientific interests („polihistor”). His knowledge covers the period from the Middle Ages to the present; being a humanist he represents a broad spectrum of interests. The great scholar, Professor Gerard Labuda (born in 1916), a man of unquenchable energy, full of new ideas and universal achievements, was Professor M. Kosman’s master and mentor.

For the good many years already and for the benefit of politology, M. Kosman practices a new type of research which he calls historical politology. This provokes, understandably, mixed reactions in the academic milieu. The achievements and personality of Kosman – a man true to science, a researcher characterized by creative imagination and synthesizing memory as well as by not so common a skill of getting people collaborate – serve as guarantees of the right choice of subject matter. The many and lasting linkages between Kosman and *belles lettres*, art, legal culture, historical and political culture may only be admired (Załubski 2000: 9–12). It suffices to mention that the conferences organized by him during the decade 1996–2006 resulted in two publication series. The first, labeled *Kultura polityczna w Polsce* [*Political culture in Poland*] includes volumes such as: *Przeszłość i terażniejszość* (1996) [*The past and the present*], *Mity i fakty* (1999) [*Myths and facts*], *Wizje przyszłości* (2000) [*Visions of the future*], *Swoi i obcy* (2004) [*The People from here and Aliens*], *W kręgu chrześcijańskiej tradycji Starego Kontynentu* (2005) [*In the circle of the Christian tradition of the Old Continent*], *Elity dawne i nowe* (2005) [*Elites, old and new*], as well as *Litwa w polskiej tradycji historycznej i kulturze politycznej* (2006) [*Lithuania in the Polish historical tradition and political culture*]. The four volumes of the second series are titled jointly „Na obrzeżach polityki” [*On the margins of politics*] and were envisaged as publications by the same group of authors that included, however, to a much greater degree some of the youngest collaborators. In the first three volumes only domestic researchers published their works, while the fourth volume contains the products of international cooperation – it was dedicated to Professor Jarosław Panek, Director of the Institute of History, and currently the vice-President of the Czech Academy of

Sciences, doctor *honoris causa* of the University of Opole. The fifth volume is composed of two parts, the first of which focuses on the history of politology and political culture. The texts included in the second part are more analytical in nature. All together, as counted by M. Kosman, in the five volumes 59 papers were published, written by 44 authors (Kosman 2007: 5–6). This is an impressive achievement – its detailed description would need quite another occasion, though. Now it is worth just mentioning the selected aspects of Kosman's historical politology.

This is not the place for broad theoretical considerations. The originator of this idea is first of all a master of brief and at the same inspiring statements. His remarks are more practical than theoretical. He has come up with an idea of a new discipline, whose subject matter he pictures in broad strokes. Seeing a good reason in undertaking this type of study, he proposes a research tool-kit for the study. The tool-kit consists of experience and knowledge that has been earned in the long process of investigating history. Therefore, Kosman's contributions to politological procedures involve features of solid description complemented with necessary research skepticism.

What is historical politology as conceptualized by Kosman? In his opinion, politology as a scientific discipline deals with the present but is oriented toward forecasting the future. The politologist research tool-kit, especially when s/he wants to enter the domain of foresight, is lacking. Prognoses are constructed by him/her in the running as it were, hastily and therefore s/he may never be sure of the opinion s/he puts forward. The historian, by contrast, being by nature more critical, offers a well tried-out research tool-kit, his/her judgment on events is more balanced, formulated at a distance and resolute. The things get much worse, of course, when – as historians or politologists – we penetrate what is contemporary. „Lived history is an objective reflection of our existence, while written history of the lived history is its subjective perception”. Only a history that is „kept close to the lived history and presents it as it was, best serves the human beings”. However, gaining and imparting the knowledge of the **present** is most problematic, especially as it creates a „corridor to the future”. The truth of the future „cannot be built on a false picture of the past. The yesterday lie will inevitably take revenge on our tomorrow”. The historian meets a politologist on the way of his/her search for truth. The truth is and can be common to both. The role that could be played by history in politology facilitates the understanding of the conception of historical politolo-

gy for, apart from everything else, the historian has at his/her disposal a thing called wisdom – the ancient were well aware of this when calling history the teacher of life (*Historia magistra vitae est*) (Labuda 1987, 1988).

And what about the borders between the two disciplines? Kosman advises us not to care too much for them, since „chronologically they are difficult to be precisely delimited and mistaken are those who would like to see them strictly separated today. For what is contemporary rapidly passes by, while what is past is marked with permanency as its experience enables us frequently to avoid mistaken decisions regarding the future” (Kosman 1996: 154). There is not enough space here to present the achievements of Kosman in the new discipline fully – therefore, I refer the reader to the bibliography (Labuda 2008: 49–50; Chodubski 2005: 15–26).

To keep the given word, I will mention that the history of political culture remains one of the most relevant research directions in politology, including all of its constituent elements, such as politics, tradition, stereotypes, symbols, myths, legends, science and religion. For Kosman, an eminent humanist, who is distinguished by „values of personal culture, and first of all by his sensitivity to the fate of the human-kind” (Leśniadorski 1977: 271), the lived history remains open and accessible to all.

There is room in politology as it is practiced in our country, with all of its various specific domains beginning with the theory of politics, through the political thought, political systems and institutions, parties and party systems, and international relations, for historical politology. This is composed of the past as a subject matter of research and the research methods that are applied while investigating the genealogy of political phenomena and processes, of political culture and the history of politology as a branch of science (Pasierb 2009: 9–32).

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