

TEKA

KOMISJI POLITOLOGII
I STOSUNKÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH

COMMISSION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

POLSKA AKADEMIA NAUK ODDZIAŁ W LUBLINIE
UNIwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej

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KOMISJI POLITOLOGII
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INTRODUCTION

Volume One of the „Teka”, prepared by the Commission of Political Science and International Affairs, Lublin Branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences, is devoted to a diagnosis of the condition of self-knowledge of Polish political science. It is an academic discipline, which, as those interested generally believe, is grappling with the problem of its identity. Two reasons for this state of affairs can be given. One is of intratheoretical nature, relating to the condition of methodological recognition, ascertainments concerning the common scope of the subject matter, goal and research methods. We are dealing here with a comparatively new science, one that has not been epistemologically well-established, has not had a debate analogous to the one we witness in the history of (also Polish) historical or sociological literature. The other reason lies in the historical circumstances, which political science had to face as an academic discipline. Now, in the days of People’s Poland, it was under special ideological supervision: party policy-makers were so much concerned with its doctrinal loyalty that, in certain periods, they wanted to have even a monopoly of it, confining this science to party-established higher education institutions. After the 1989 breakthrough, already in the free, democratic Republic of Poland, political science had to regain its credibility anew – both with the academic circles (the humanities in the broad sense) and with the non-academic environment, in relations with society and the world of politics. This was a great challenge to it. Strong pressures on the part of the new, rapidly changing socio-political realities as well as the accompanying organizational and institutional framework of the functioning of science itself caused political sciences to often give priority to the needs for adjustment over self-reflection. The latter requires more comfortable situations that provide opportunities for distancing from oneself and comparing oneself with others. It is only such relativization that can lead to the desirable awareness of the ideological burden of the past and final liberation from it. It appears, however, that Polish political science has yet to wait for this moment for some time.

For the moment, there are still voices in it typical of subjects forced to constantly fend off attacks and objections, which is why they respond nervously, according to the „besieged fortress” syndrome: defend our own positions, don’t

let them break up our ranks, no alliances with alien parties This desire for self-preservation is a defense reaction to a disturbed sense of identity caused by the above-mentioned transformations. It is visible both in organizational measures aimed at integration of the circles of scholars and in the research program they are implementing, strongly marked by their concern with narrowly understood scientificity, according to the positivist (modernist) vision of the system of knowledge carefully divided into autonomous allotments linked together only by the common ground of methods and techniques of empirical research. Following this program, one must not, for example, seek sources of inspiration for theory of politics in the theory of history or sociology, nor can one take into consideration in it the achievements of contemporary philosophy or cultural studies. As a result of adoption of such an exclusive strategy of self-definition, political science has serious problems with conceptualization of the object of its research, which is why the studies produced under its banner have, let us generalize, a historical-descriptive character. They contain few concepts that could allow us to find our way around, i.e. understand the world. There are few semantic analyses, few disputes over the meaning of the language, vocabulary and terms we use in the constantly changing *language games*. This research pragmatics contains too few disputes over which of these uses of even such basic categories today as for example, 'state', 'nation', 'sovereignty', 'modernity', 'democracy', 'power/authority' or 'party' has a higher evaluative power that will allow us to notice something new that we have not seen before. There are too few attempts in it to reach the *truth*, which, apart from empirical facts – a description of reality, is also made up of semantics or language itself used or proposed by the political scientist. There is not enough problematization of relations between this language, i.e. representations, ways of presenting (political) reality, and that which is presented (reality). As one may suspect, the deprivation thus diagnosed of research problems in the area of political science derives from the fact that it has so far failed to notice the significance that may stem for it from the new linguistic direction in world humanities, which shows that, in most general terms, the way we speak about the world and present it determines how we perceive it. In other words, this new direction makes us realize that we never have direct access to the world. Nor is there, as a result, anything like political reality *in itself*, hidden under the layer of its descriptions. Consequently, there is no exclusive and only objective way of knowing it. One should also conclude from this metatheoretical recognition, to go even further, that there are also no and cannot be any disciplines in *pure* form both in theory and in research practice of social sciences in particular and more broadly, in humanities. Therefore, there is no *pure* political science and likewise, *pure* sociology or philosophy. Methodological rigor in this respect is based on arbitrary and illusory postulates, which became part of history of science long ago.

If we view Polish political science from the standpoint of its achieved and properly articulated self-understanding, then, having obviously to accept necessary oversimplifications in this short presentation, we should state that it is still in some critical, transition stage of its development. Gradually, political science is beginning to be aware of the non-transparency of language/languages of scientific research. This awareness entails acceptance of the discipline composed of many different subdisciplines, complementary to one another because of the subject matter, tasks, and fragmentariness of investigations, also devoid of formal, procedural foundations of unity. Acceptance of the hybrid structure and concomitant methodological *impurity* of political science, especially oriented towards the contemporary world, pluralist and heterogeneous in each of its dimensions, turns out to be in this perspective an exceptional chance for it: this broadens the scope and power of political science's explanatory capabilities, makes it attractive on the knowledge market both among academic scholars of different provenance and in other groups of its potential addressees such as politicians, journalists or organizers of social life. Only such science appears to be capable of avoiding academic ossification, which results in dementia manifested in discovering and preaching trivial and uninteresting truths. Only such science can help us all realize that politics is a complex cultural practice, which cannot be theoretized and confined within one universal epistemological script.

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The papers collected in the present volume were authored by scholars from one academic center: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University's Faculty of Political Science in Lublin. Nevertheless, the Editor believes they reflect the state of self-awareness of the representative part of Polish political science today. They are focused on the issues crucial to its identity that are produced, on the one hand, by the institutional framework and, on the other, by the specificity of science of politics itself. The presentation of the institutional side of the subject has been dealt with in the introductory paper by Edward Olszewski *Traditions and the Present of Political Science Studies in Poland*. This is a report of its kind on the state of the discipline, which, apart from a historical outline, also presents the most up-to-date, detailed information – facts and figures – concerning the institutions associated with it. It is followed by Jan P. Hudzik's essay *Political Science: The Problem of Identity of the Discipline. Metatheoretical Reflections* – written with a view to provoking fundamental discussion on whether political science is a separate autonomous science at all, and if so, what type it is and what its specificity consists in. The author defines it as a *discursive platform*, using for its description the categories of general methodology of sciences, such as the object, tasks, and partiality of cognition, as well as those derived from

philosophically conceived research pragmatics, such as pragmatism and hermeneutics. The problem of redefinition of political science is then discussed by Agnieszka Pawłowska and Andrzej Mischuk in their joint paper: *Political Science – New Areas of Investigation*. They start with ascertaining the fact of today's dispersed responsibility for political decision-making or in other words – distribution of the political process over different 'sites' of public space: local, regional, or global Faced with this state of affairs, political science should, they believe, broaden the scope of its research with at least three areas: governance, virtual space of politics or e-government and e-administration, and finally, with management in the public sector. The two authors are convinced that the problem of Polish political science, dominated by genetic-chronological and institutional-legal approaches, lies in that it is simply unable to describe and explain this type of phenomena. Another proposal for broadening the research area of political science is offered by Maria Marczevska-Rytko – it has been signaled in the title of her paper *Relations between Politics and Religion as a Challenge to Political Scientists*. The religious factor, the author holds, has so far played a minor role in political science investigations. This situation is now changing as a result of the growing significance of religious fundamentalism and the revival of religion in general in the globalizing world. In her conclusions the author suggests that the growing popularity of these issues with Polish political scientists in recent times is also additionally due to the fact that religion still gives legitimacy to authority in this country. Close to empirical knowledge are also the deliberations by Henryk Chałupczak called *Ethnic Problems as the Subject and Object of Political Science Research*, whose goal is to establish in what way, within ethnic studies, the identity of political science is realized. It appears in this discussion as a special, hybrid-structured cognitive instrument: not only interdisciplinary but also multi-paradigmatic, dependent in its actions on adopted research strategies, a kind of metanarrations that shape our understanding of such general terms as 'migrations', 'ethnic minorities', 'or Polonia' (Polish communities abroad). In his essay *Contemporary History and Political Science. Selected Methodological Problems*, Stefan Stepień, in turn, discerns the identity crisis in the discipline in question, which, he believes, can be reduced to the lack of a definite standpoint on the issues of political theory. This fact prompts the author to compare political science to the conception of contemporary history and then to follow methodological problems shared by both sciences.

The last two papers touch upon the issues raised by the process itself of teaching political science in Poland. In her paper *Political Communication as the Object of Political Science and Journalistic Studies. Introductory Remarks*, Iwona Hofman discusses two problems. First, she writes, by way of information and polemic, about the position and importance of the science of political communication in the curricula of political science studies, and about the major (or specialization) in journalism and/or social communication, taught as part of this study program. Second, she briefly describes the discipline dealing with this

communication – she indicates its areas of research and lists the names of scholars both in Poland and abroad. The closing text in this volume, one by Włodzimierz Mich – *On the Purity of Political Science Research. A Polemical Approach* – has the character of an intervention statement, dealing with a number of practical problems that political science centers in Poland have to tackle every day. The author is therefore wondering according to what criteria political science investigations should be distinguished from historical or legal ones, the more so if their results are to be graded with awarding a degree (master's, doctoral or postdoctoral – habilitated doctor) or a title (professor). How should we treat the subjects in media science and social communication taught at political science departments? These questions reflect the atmosphere of many discussions, both official, taking place at the meetings of institute or faculty councils, and those entirely private, started at university corridors and in professors' offices.

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