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The Dispute Over the Identity of Political Science

Abstract: The chapter presents the main axes of the dispute over the identity of political science in Poland in the last half-century, with special emphasis put on the period after 1989. Debates concentrating on three identities criteria are discussed, i.e., the research object of political science, the methods and techniques used in political science inquiry and history and organization of the discipline in Poland. The possibility of indicating the boundaries of the discipline based on a distinct object of research or a unique political science method is considered to be incorrect. Therefore, the answer to the identity criteria question lies rather in organizational and historical differences, as well as in special political scientific perspective. In other words, discipline identity is more about theories, language, the way of posing research problems, than methods and object. The outcomes of these disputes for the pluralism of the approaches in political science and interdisciplinarity are also discussed.

Keywords: political science, criteria of discipline identity, research object and methods, history of discipline, interdisciplinarity

Introduction

Few disputes have engaged the political science community in Poland as much in the last half-century as the question of the discipline's identity. It was the central issue of the plenary sessions of the first political science congresses in Warsaw (Wojtaszczyk, Mirska, 2009), Poznań and Kraków (Szlachta, 2015a); it was addressed at numerous conferences, including those in Lublin (Olszewski,

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1997), Warsaw (Wojtaszczyk et al., 1998), Wrocław (Łoś-Nowak, 1998), Kraków (Krauz-Mozer, Ścigaj, 2013), Zielona Góra (Młyńczyk, Nitschke, 2013), Mądralin (Karwat, Kaczmarek, 2015) and many others. It was also the object of numerous publication initiatives (Czajowski, Sobkowiak, 2012; Jurga-Wosik et al., 2014; Nocoń, 2017c) acquiring special significance in Poland (Szewczak, 2017, p. 52).

It is worth remembering that this debate is related to the socio-political changes in Poland of the last three decades. Especially, 1989 was a significant turning point for Polish political science and its identity as a discipline (Wojtaszczyk, 2015, p. 56). Since then, there has been a dynamic growth in the number of universities and colleges offering studies in political science, as well as students and graduates in political science (Olszewski, 2001; Krauz-Mozer et al., 2011). The systemic transformation also made pluralisation of research approaches and integration of Polish political science discourse with global one possible. It was important to go beyond the Marxist perspective that was dominant in the 1970s and 1980s (Opalek, 1978a; Blok, 2020b, p. 17). Undermining of this perspective often resulted from the need to break with the communist era, rather than from substantive arguments or scientific criticism – just as the introduction of new approaches was not always done with due diligence to avoid accusations of copying and reproducing “Western” ideas. The search for a discipline’s identity is, in a sense, a “product of its time” responding to the threats posed by accusations of politicisation in earlier times, as well as the processes of division and autonomisation of various related disciplines (Blok, 2020b).

Two further points must be added as an introduction: first, terminological nuances related to the use of various and often difficult to translate categories play a role in the debate on the identity of Polish political science (e.g., *politologia* – sometimes translated as “politology”, *nauka o polityce* – “political science” or “politics”, *nauki o polityce* – “political sciences”, *nauki polityczne* – “political sciences” as well). Regardless of the problems above, the term “political science” will be used as the broadest term in this chapter, sometimes interchangeably with the “politics”. Such a practice is common and justifiably used in order to emphasize the boundaries of the discipline and its openness to other fields and related disciplines (Żukowski, 2006, pp. 8–9; Nocoń, 2010, p. 55; Jakubowski et al., 2013, p. 34; Wojtaszczyk, 2015, p. 52; Karwat, 2015a, p. 134). The use of the term “political science” also goes against the arbitrary ministerial decisions regarding the typologisation of fields and disciplines in Poland (Janusz, 2015, pp. 244–246). Nevertheless, such a choice seems appropriate and in line with Polish and international literature on political science history and identity (Ulicka, 2015). Secondly, realising the complexity of the object matter of political science – expressed if only in the separation of its primary areas (Ulicka, 2015, pp. 105–107) – my reflections here will recapitulate the disputes carried out within the theory of politics due to the fact that they were raised and extensively discussed there.

Discipline identity criteria

Nearly 50 years ago, Jan Woleński noted that two main orientations clash in political science: pluralism and monism. If politics is a complex phenomenon that can be studied from the perspectives of various disciplines, different methods and techniques whose boundaries cannot be established and defined, and which has been a topic of interest since antiquity, then political science is actually a kind of federation of disciplines, without its method and without a concretised object, according to proponents of the former. Those in favour of the second argue that if each object of interest in the social sciences (including politics) can be studied from different points, using different techniques and methods, is multifaceted but also underdetermined and difficult to define, this cannot be an obstacle to take attempts to create an independent and separate discipline, while pluralists by their attitude support the fragmentation of science and hinder the theorising processes. For all intents and purposes, Woleński leaves the pluralists' arguments without a deeper recognition (1975, pp. 32–35), which is important because pluralism, in this case, refers to the pre-theoretical state of the discipline and not to the complexity of perspectives and methods in a discipline already formed, as I will discuss later. Be that as it may, the philosopher also criticises the monism view, pointing out that the source of its fallacy is the adoption of the object-methodological criterion of the discipline's identity, where its shape and boundaries are determined precisely by the specified object and unique method. And yet, if "it is not the object that constitutes the theory, but the theory its object" (Woleński, 1975, p. 41), monism then understood in unitarian and unitary terms is also wrong. This is because the proper developmental goal of a scientific discipline is a specific theory, the object of which can change and which can be tested using various methods (Woleński, 1975; Borowiec, 2014). Such a political theory cannot, after all, be suspended in a vacuum and must consider the findings of history, sociology, and economics – which form the core of the social sciences, just as physics, chemistry and biology form the core of the natural sciences. As a result, theories of politics (Woleński speaks of the development of middle-range theories) should take into account the determinants flowing from economic relations, social consciousness and their variability over time (Woleński, 1975).

Inscribed directly in Marx's theory of social development, Woleński's position, as well as the somewhat later views of Artur Bodnar and Olgierd Cetwiński (Bodnar, Cetwiński, 1977), proved to be an important starting point for the recognition of the idea of theoretical political science, in opposition to traditional political science (Klementewicz, 1991a; 2004, pp. 235–238). I will come back to these concerns later, but for now it is important to stress the understanding that underlies the monism perspective: that a discipline's identity can be established by an object-methodological criterion. Over the ensuing decades,

this viewpoint was frequently reiterated, and many authors emphasised that in order to determine the identity of a discipline, we must focus on questions about its methodology and/or object (Hładkiewicz, 2006, pp. 26–27; Żebrowski, 2012, p. 11; Szczepański, 2013, pp. 13–15), occasionally differentiating between a material object and a formal object, that is, an overlapped object of actual observation and an aspect of that object that differs from other disciplines (Jakubowski, Zamecki, 2013, p. 115; Jakubowski et al., 2013, pp. 26–28). The key importance of theory as an identity element for political science (Klementewicz, 1991a; Krauz-Mozer, 2005; Blok, 2013; Karwat, Kaczmarek, 2015, pp. 11–12; Paruch, 2017, p. 47), language and terminology (Ulicka, 2015, p. 109; Pietraś, 2015, p. 67), research goals and objectives (Jakubowski, Zamecki, 2013, p. 115), conceptualisation and originality of the research questions (Ozimek-Hanslik, 2020, p. 87) posed – as well as different history, organisation, institutional development (Janowski, 2011, p. 15; Blok, 2013, p. 40) – were also pointed out (following Woleński). The above list sets the stage for further reflection and, more specifically, in order to recapitulate the disputes over the identity of the discipline, one must look at the debates over the object of study of political science, politics method and the history and organisation of the discipline. I should mention that this work's later chapters will go into greater detail on these problems.

Political science object and its role in debate on political science identity

The question of political science research object is entangled with the political science history because its scope is affected by new political theories and new research approaches. It, therefore, sounded different when the primary object of interest of the discipline was politics implemented by government institutions and public power, which is usually in Polish tradition called “cratocentric orientation”; and yet, as we remember, almost until the 20th century, the core of the forging of the discipline in universities and academies was quite precisely defined focusing on the state, its history, doctrines, administration, economics and diplomacy (Mojsiewicz, 2005, pp. 16–18). It is in this vein that Franciszek Kasparek explicitly noted that “the object of common political sciences is the state” (Kasparek, 1877, p. 2). This issue changed its scope when sociocentric thinking broadened the object of study to include the social foundations of politics, political processes, political behaviour, political conflict, political consciousness, political culture, political decisions, systemic issues, gender issues and much more (Cetwiński, 1975; Jabłoński, 1991; Karwat, 2018) – which also gave rise, we should add, to fears of reducing political science to sociology (Porębski, 1996,

pp. 24–25). It also overlapped with more “traditional” issues related to philosophical roots (i.e., the question of morality, values, and directives regarding justice) (Waśkiewicz, 1998; Stankiewicz, 2003).

Well-known publications from as late as the 1970s and 1980s (by authors affiliated with the Committee on Political Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Central Methodological Centre for Political Science Studies) rounded out the object of political science research by enumerating such issues as political power (Pianowski, Tarnawski, 1982), political systems (Lamentowicz, 1978), political participation, political behaviour (Opalek, 1978b; Bodio, 1982b; Klementewicz, 1982b), political agency (Karwat, Milanowski, 1982), political consciousness and culture (Bodio, 1982a; Barcikowski, Pańków, 1982; Pańków, 1982), political values and norms (Cetwiński, 1978; Blaszcze, 1978; Milanowski, Karwat, 1982; Misiunia, 1982; Milanowski 1982), political needs and interests (Gieorgica, 1978; 1982b; Karwat, 1982) and political decisions (Bodnar, 1978b; Klementewicz, 1982a).

After the 1989 breakthrough, the above list was frequently reproduced and supplemented with new threads, including – but not limited to – issues related to communication and media, security, international relations, biopolitics and many others. As the literature on this topic is so broad and includes both lists of the components that make up research object of political science (see: Chmaj, Żmigrodzki, 1996, pp. 20–27; Jabłoński, Sobkowiak, 1998, 1999; Chmaj, 2001, pp. 125–127; Marczevska-Rytko, 2001, pp. 203–210; Chodubski, Malinowski, 2006; Stankiewicz, 2006, pp. 53–80; Żukowski, 2006, pp. 26–29; Blok, 2009a, pp. 55–62; Żebrowski, 2012; Jakubowski, Zamęcki, 2013, pp. 122–124; Jakubowski et al., 2013, pp. 26–43; Łubiński et al., 2015, pp. 15–21; Sasińska-Klas, 2015; Ulicka, 2015, pp. 105–110) and attempts to define it using metaphors and paradoxes, there is no need to recollect and enumerate them here (Kaczmarek, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2013; Karwat, 2007).

With few exceptions over the past five decades, Polish political scientists have been united by the belief that the research object is variable (Krauz-Mozer, 2001) and shared with other disciplines (Karwat, 2001, pp. 98–100). Adequate conceptual categories were also sought to convey its specificity. Mirosław Karwat says in this context that this object is syndromatic – that is, that it is a tangle of “[...] heterogeneous phenomena, with different origins, conditions, diverse form and different formal belonging to various fields (technology, economy, symbolic culture), not reducible to one dimension (e.g., economic, legal or religious), creating a unique quality” (2009, p. 175). According to Filip Pierzchalski, it is blurred and it is impossible to point to a permanent and unquestionable criterion for qualifying some phenomena as political (2013, pp. 35–51). The research object of political science is also sometimes described as polymorphic which has clear consequences – namely, not being able to clearly delimit its boundaries and agreeing to its multifaceted, variable and syndromatic

nature, one must also accept the thesis of the need for a holistic explanation of partial cases (Blok, 2017, pp. 35–37). This requires a strong grounding in and collaboration with the theories of the social sciences and humanities in general, interdisciplinary proficiency, and a perspective that combines multiple concepts to unveil complex political phenomena (Klementewicz, 2010b; 2011). The search for the discipline's identity on this ground is akin to navigating a blind alley or “catching flies in a hole filled sieve”, as Karwat (2009, p. 188) colourfully summarised these issues. In other words, the object of political science cannot be easily defined and cannot be enclosed within unambiguous boundaries (Karwat, 2001, p. 98). This object is ontologically coincident with the object of other social science disciplines – one can, at most, look at it from a different perspective, ask different questions, emphasise different aspects (Krauz-Mozer, 1992, pp. 11–12; 2005, pp. 14–15), while at the theoretical level, interact with and draw from other social theories (Blok, 2020b, p. 20).

However, the indeterminacy, blurriness and syndromatic nature of the research object did not close the discussion on approximating what political science does. It has evolved in character, nevertheless, and now turned to “field and process” rather than “criteria and definitions”. In other words, among the most significant attempts to specify the object of political science in Polish reflection are proposals to identify the field of politics and to shift reflection from the category of politics to the phenomenon of “the political”. With this in mind, there have been attempts to approximate and clarify it, among which the most important are the proposal to identify the field of politics and the shift of reflection from the politics category to the phenomenon of “the political”.

The politics field concept is an important alternative to the cratocentric view, which emphasises the political importance of economic, sociological, psychological, and legal factors (Gulczyński, 2010; Karwat, 2018, p. 76). According to Artur Bodnar, political phenomena are crucially influenced by the economic base, social structures, social consciousness, and ideological values, while they themselves are reflections and expressions of these four elements (1978a, pp. 21–22). Elaborating on the above idea, Zbigniew Blok rightly pointed out the danger of substantialising Bodnar's concept of the political field and using it to search for definitions of politics based on stable characteristics. Politics, on the other hand, is historically variable, as are its organisational forms. The field of politics consists of four basic types of activity, with their role and strength dependent on the context and historical circumstances. As a result, gathering and information societies cannot be described and explained in the same way. These four activities, which are crucial to the existence of societies, Blok calls the “first-level fields of politics” and labels them as economic activity or, as he says, economic society, state activity, or state society, information and education activity or ideological society, and association and civic activity, or civil society (2009a, pp. 62–72). First-level fields of politics are variable and depend most

heavily on historical circumstances. With the intersection, the overlap of two, three or four forms of activity, we get more and more internally complex but also more durable – I think, second-, third- and fourth-level fields. In the latter case, only the intersection of all four forms (what is important) of activity gives the core of politics (Blok, 2009a, pp. 62–72; 2009b; Blok, Kołodziejczak, 2015, p. 22).

Difficulties with defining politics, the inadequacies and limitations of more “traditional” definitions (e.g., the conflicting definition of politics essentially prevents adequate cognition and the construction of a sound political theory due to its coverage of a heterogeneous class of phenomena) (Klementewicz, 1991b, p. 9) and the desire to avoid substantialist and crato-centric constraints (Minkner, 2014, pp. 7–8; Szewczak, 2017; Borowiec, 2017b) pushed Polish political scientists to shift their emphasis to considering the characteristics of the political and, thus, join the discussion in the foreign literature (see: Mouffe, 2008; Schmitt, 2012; Minkner, 2017b; Biały, 2018). Thinking about the political is in essence anti-formalist, which leads to the denial of the possibility of identifying a single, overarching criterion for what constitutes the political (Minkner, 2014, p. 13). It is a volatile category evolving with the changing social reality (Rubisz, 2015) and a primary one opening political science analysis to seemingly non-political phenomena (Minkner, 2017a, p. 11). In this sense, the boundaries of political science also become, to some extent, unstable, fluid, and contextual (Karwat, 2010, p. 65; 2015b, pp. 35–36).

In Polish political science, various conceptualisations of the political have been developed, including both empirical and normative research perspectives (see: Ryszka, 1988; Dybel, Wróbel, 2008; Golinowski, Pierzchalski, 2011; Czajowski, Sobkowiak, 2012; Jurga-Wosik et al., 2014; Sawczyński, 2016). Thus, the political is considered from a diversity perspective that considers politically primary or secondary (Karwat, 2010, pp. 67–75), attributive or contextual phenomena (Karwat, 2015b, p. 47), as well as interactions with values and ideologies, where defining the limits of what is political is complicated by axiological issues. Moreover, as Minkner notes, at the analytical level, the concept of the political appears as an explanatory category in four describable guises: as a feature and features of the political, as a manifestation of a certain area of social life, as an aspect and aspects of the political and as a type of social relations (2015, pp. 57–68). Karwat, on the other hand, also points to three levels of the political: as a feature of participants and/or phenomena, as a feature of the interdependence of these elements, and as a feature of the system (2015b, pp. 46–47). The object of reflection of Polish political scientists was also the distinguishing features and factors of political character, including, among others, contradictions of interests, macro-social scope, universality, massiveness, entanglement in the processes of integration, disintegration and reintegration, ideologisation of the phenomenon, social momentousness and others (see: Blok, 2009a, pp. 40–41; Karwat, 2010, pp. 82–84; Rosicki, Szewczak, 2012). This thread is inevitably intertwined with the dispute over political agency and the conditions for

attributing the qualities of causality and consciousness to political actors (Pierzchalski, 2009; 2020).

The category of “the political” remains crucial in an ongoing debate at the semantic and methodological levels (Ryszka, 1988; Karwat, 2015), with this state of affairs not read as problematic but, in principle, accepted and treated as desirable. This is because the difficulty of finding clear and final settlements on what is political reflects the processual, contextual, blurry and syndromatic nature of the research object, as well as opens political science reflection to new areas and challenges simple divisions between normative and empirical theories (see: Rosicki, Szewczak, 2012; Minkner, 2014, Szewczak, 2014; Ozimek-Hanslik, 2020). The political, thus, remains an “essentially contested” concept (Minkner, 2015, p. 53); however, most researchers will agree that it is neither a problem nor a burden.

It should also be mentioned that problems with indicating the boundary of the discipline may also be related to the politicisation of various spheres of life and the tying of these politicised phenomena to political science reflection (Nocoń, 2010, pp. 53–54). Importantly, the debate on the identity of political science also did not lack reflection on the specialised language that enables adequate cognition while distinguishing political science thinking from the realm of politics – which is all the more important because, after all, this language is fluid, changeable and heavily influenced by colloquial language and politics (Blok, 2001, pp. 40–53).

Reflection on “the political” is a part of another fundamental issue for the dispute over the identity of political science; namely, it illustrates well the conviction of the inevitable paradigmatic pluralism (Jabłoński, 2011; Ozimek-Hanslik, 2020, p. 85) and interdisciplinarity of research. This is a good time to address the second criterion of identity (i.e., the dispute over the methodological distinctiveness of political science).

Methodological issues in political science identity debate?

Whether political science has its own specific and unique method was, in principle, not problematic for Polish political scientists in the 1970s and 1980s. At the time, it was fairly widely recognised that politics could and should be studied using various methods and what determines political science is a particular aspect, not a method or technique (Woleński, 1975; Georgica, 1982a). Nevertheless, at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, there were proposals aimed at capturing a single and unique “political science method” (Muszyński, 2007, pp. 243–244). This was unequivocally articulated by Andrzej Chodubski, who stated that “political science, dealing with the recognition of phenomena and processes of

socio-political life, uses various methods. Of particular importance to this discipline of cognition, however, is the still-forming political science method. Its essence is the application of political science concepts and theories to explain the phenomena studied” (2004, pp. 116–117). Specifying the distinguishing features of the political science method, Chodubski mentions: the application of political science concepts and categories in the processes of explanation, integration of empirical and pragmatic perspectives, the long-time horizon of reflection, emphasis on the processes of institutionalisation of socio-political life, embedding in global political science paradigms and approaches, moving from colloquial to scientific approaches to political phenomena, focusing on political processes, their dynamics, global conditions, causes, effects and their interdependencies, relationships, interactions, as well as forecasting their future shape (2013, pp. 443–444). Chodubski further emphasises elsewhere that the central political science concept is power, and central to political science analysis is the research of the processes of its acquisition, exercise, and maintenance (2006, p. 15). Besides, the Gdańsk-based political scientist lists political methods such as system analysis, quantitative and qualitative approaches, comparative method (analogy), institutional-legal analysis, historical analysis, behaviouralism, the decision-making method, simulation, and some less popular ones (2004, pp. 117–132).

This juxtaposition of mutually exclusive claims, that is, the belief in the existence of a political science method and the list of different methods used in political science, suggests that Chodubski understands the concept of method in an inconsistent, heterogeneous, and erroneous way. The political science method, in his view, is – for good measure – a certain perspective, a focus on a political aspect, a “point of view”, possibly, “the goal of political science research”, while the list of methods used in political science is various paradigms, procedures for collecting data or compiling data and interpreting it (Szewczak, 2017; Blok, 2020a). In this sense, such a position is misleadingly deluding that any political science “method” is possible. Unfortunately, it is still sometimes duplicated in the literature today.

While Chodubski’s position on the political science method can be considered to be based on a misunderstanding of what a method is, Ryszard Skarzyński’s proposal is a mixture of contradictions, errors, inadequate demands and accusations that turn into insults against opponents of the discipline’s object-methodological criterion. Much has already been written on this matter, so it is unnecessary to revisit it (Karwat 2012; 2015b, p. 38). It suffices to say that, according to this author, political science is at a kind of turning point, which he calls “the basic dilemma of political science”, and which boils down to a choice between political science as an independent and defined discipline, and political science as a general name for “indefinite, vague and illusory knowledge of society” without the status of an independent discipline (Skarzyński, 2012, p. 31). This status is threatened by interdisciplinarity leading to the conclusion that political

science does not have its own research object (Skarzyński, 2012, p. 239), while, as Skarzyński says, “political science deals with the research of that particular way of functioning of human collectives, which leads to the emergence of unions aiming to establish by vocation and by every means a universal order according to its own vision” (2012, p. 296). Therefore, the object of political science is the relations of power in any organised human groups, from which relations of subordination and domination grow, or even shorter: “political science is the research of what is political in its nature” (Skarzyński, 2012, p. 257). Furthermore, on a practical level, what is political can be reduced, according to Skarzyński, to a particular fusion of normative visions of politics and its biological basis. Briefly: his proposal is neither clear nor conclusive.

Despite the grand declarations, Skarzyński’s position on the political science method is nevertheless somewhat cautious. His numerous and insulting remarks referring to the methodological “shoddiness” and incompetence of the political science community in Poland, accusations that the only “method” of political science is “ideocopy”, are not at all a starting point for value propositions. After the defeat in the field of defining the object, Skarzyński notes: “Political science does not have its own specific method of cognition. It can apply any, but only to its own object of cognition” (2012, p. 331). Leaving aside the issue of the difference between cognition and research and – again – the difficulty of determining how the concept of method is understood here, it can be concluded that the search for a specific political science method has not been successful, while the above positions “are [...] rather unique and definitely not shared by the majority of Polish political scientists” (Blok, 2013, p. 42). In other words, rather than being specific to a single field, object-methodological divergence is a feature of the social sciences as a whole. Thus, there is no distinct, qualitatively different methodology for political science, and it is this realisation that sets theoretical political science apart from traditional political science, which bases its identity on dissimilarity but also precise theoretical relationships. Traditional political science sees its identity in the object-methodological criterion (Klementewicz, 2004, p. 236).

A review of the literature shows that contrary to the above positions, the political science community is united by the conviction that it is necessary to deepen methodological reflection without the need for a doomed search for a political science method, which is sometimes seen as an advantage and as an invitation to further debates and development of methodology, rather than closing the field of discussion (Krauz-Mozer, 2009, p. 159; 2013). Barbara Krauz-Mozer puts it bluntly that the ability to aspectualise a common research object in the social sciences is an expression of research artistry rather than a weakness (2015, p. 185). As a result, a widely accepted view, albeit not without criticism, is the recognition that political science uses multiple, diverse methods based on multiple research approaches and paradigms, often synthesising and integrating

them (Węgrzecki, 2004; Krauz-Mozer, 2005, p. 15; Nocoń, 2006; Jabłoński, 2013). This is expressed not only in the frequent invocation of the pluralistic nature of the discipline, but also in the search for more appropriate terms for it, such as “megadiscipline” (Karwat, Kaczmarek, 2015, p. 10; Karwat, 2015, p. 134), “multidiscipline” (Karwat, 2010, p. 65; Ulicka, 2015, p. 108) or “polyphonic” discipline (Wolff-Powęska, 2012, p. 11), where conducting research even requires a certain dexterity and ability to combine perspectives and approaches. From this follows a rather simple conclusion, namely that what is truly dangerous to the development of the discipline is not its interdisciplinarity – or even transdisciplinarity as it is sometimes said (Jakubowski, Zamecki, 2013) – but the unnecessary struggle and competition between “schools and cults”, as Gabriel Almond would say (1990).

The idea of pluralistic research using a variety of approaches and methods to explain the complex, historical, changeable and syndromatic research object (such as the political) requires thinking in interdisciplinary terms. It is not about the limited viewpoint based on behaviourist thinking and associated with the development of various theories and the use of various methodologies that, after all, meet the conditions of naturalistic ontology and epistemology, but rather about interdisciplinarity that permits the consideration of other underlying assumptions and research approaches. Therefore, if we approach interdisciplinarity broadly, seeing in it the potential for combining research topics, using and combining the accomplishments of other disciplines, as well as integration at the theoretical level (Ulicka, 2009, pp. 189–200), then interdisciplinarity not only becomes a means of achieving identity but also creates a truly pluralistic foundation, whereby it is not about an ad hoc, sloganeering interdisciplinarity, consisting in the casual use of the accomplishments of other disciplines (Klementewicz, 2004; Blok, 2020b). Waldemar Paruch warns in this respect that methodological interdisciplinarity requires methodological and theoretical proficiency in other disciplines, and just using elements of historical, legal, economic or other knowledge in political science research does not yet mean conducting interdisciplinary research (2017, pp. 48–49). We should add that to avoid the potential pitfalls of interdisciplinarity, Michał Węsierski proposed using the concepts of infradisciplinarity and ultradisciplinarity referring to a certain theoretical and methodological coherence leading to explanation instead of superficial descriptiveness guided by an “interdisciplinary” approach (2011).

As a result, pluralism in political science seems to have two dimensions: a normative one, postulating the need to take into account different perspectives without hierarchising them in the research of what is political; and a pragmatic one pointing to the need to operate with different categories, theories – in a word: a diverse language for explaining and understanding what is political. Methods, then, are tools that can be used depending on the research problem, and it is the latter that determines the direction and limits of their application.

The problems that accompany research choices in the space of pluralistic political science can be described by a series of dichotomies, among which the most important are: normative versus empirical, description versus explanation, induction versus deduction, reach versus certainty, exegesis versus exploration, governmental orientation versus political orientation and understanding versus change (Krauz-Mozer, Ścigaj, 2013; Grofman, 1997, pp. 75–79).

Importantly, pluralism in political science, while having great advantages, also carries some risks at the methodological level in terms of identifying the criteria that determine the cognitive value of the results obtained and the possibility of integrating the claims (Nocoń, 2017a; 2017b, p. 265) – and this again means that, in practice, pluralism requires working on ways to communicate and organise the various perspectives (Borowiec, 2017a).

The question of which methods make up the canon of political science methodology has also been posed repeatedly in the literature. Sometimes their introduction into political science leads to the increase in awareness of the research object (Wojtaszczyk, 2015, pp. 57–58). Although this is not an error in and of itself, the fact that the concept of method exists in several contexts and is not used consistently makes comparison and evaluation difficult. It suffices to say that among the commonly cited methods useful in political science research, there are often some general directives of research conduct, paradigm, set of activities and sometimes even the purpose of the research. Among them appear those already pointed out by Chodubski (2004), as well as quantitative methods, empirical methods (Chmaj, Żmigrodzki, 1996), the monographic method (Pawłuszko, 2013), various auxiliary methods in the form of the literary analysis and criticism method, the monographic method, the personal documents method and the prosopographical method (Jakubowski et al., 2003, pp. 207–217). There are also references to methods more in line with those customarily mentioned in social science methodology textbooks: survey research, field research, observation, content analysis and narrative analysis (Bäcker, 2016). Importantly, a clearly eclectic and highly differentiated picture of “political science methods” also emerges from a review of syllabuses for methods courses taught at Polish universities (Ścigaj, 2015).

These and other proposals were critically discussed by Zbigniew Blok, showing that many of the above-mentioned “methods” (e.g., decision-making, systemic, instance-legal) are not only not well defined, but in many cases are difficult to be called methods – which certainly hinders their application and encourages further reflection on the catalogue of methods used in political science (2020a). In this debate, attention was also drawn to the criteria for using these methods to obtain valuable results (Krauz-Mozer, 2001, pp. 15–19). Also, the Polish Political Science Association and the Political Science Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences formulated requirements for doctoral and

postdoctoral theses to be recognised as political science, stressing the special importance of methodological correctness (Ulicka, 2015, pp. 102–103).

Nevertheless, despite mistakes or oversimplifications in describing the research methodologies used in political science, there is a general agreement on the research assumptions that underpins contemporary pluralism. It is generally accepted that the research object is highly complex and can be studied with different assumptions and methods, embedded in various approaches and paradigms, adopting a naturalistic or anti-naturalistic ontology and epistemology, operating with normative and empirical theories, conducting research according to an analytical-empirical or humanistic-hermeneutic model and, finally, rooting political science in both the humanistic and social science traditions (see: Krauz-Mozer, 2004, pp. 25–38; 2005, pp. 39–48; Łukowski, 2009; Klementewicz, 2010a; 2010b; Szlachta, 2013; 2015b; Janusz, 2015; Borowiec, 2017a; Hudzik, 2017). Importantly, in recent years there has been a growing resonance of voices emphasising the need to introduce the critical model into Polish political science on a larger scale (Pierzchalski, 2017; Mikołajczyk, Karwat, 2017; Hudzik, 2018).

In the discussion on pluralism of approaches and methods, there were also calls for a clarification of how the reconciliation of often fundamentally different approaches and methods would take place. Among them, Krauz-Mozer's proposal to weaken methodological disputes with a dialogue-oriented understanding perspective between representatives of different positions is particularly worth mentioning. The starting point here is an awareness of the complexity, syndromaticity and variability of the research object translated into a directive to practically use multiple methods on the way to a complex and multifaceted picture of political phenomena. And radical pluralism so conceived distinguishes political science from other social sciences. This is because it allows us to connect methods and techniques to the assumptions, goals, and values that researchers inevitably bring to the research. Despite attempts at control, they always impact the choice of the research objective and the direction and nature of interpretation of the results. Since there is no escaping it, the thing should be used in achieving the best and most adequate images of reality using the most effective methods for a given problem. This pluralism is, therefore, rooted in an effort to strike a balance between method and standard, sensory experience and reason, factual and value judgements, quantitative and qualitative approaches, explanation and understanding, empiricism and normativism (Krauz-Mozer, 2009, pp. 161–162; Krauz-Mozer, Ścigaj, 2013, p. 19).

Organisational and institutional identity of political science?

The third important field in which the identity of political science in Poland is being debated is the area of its history and organisation. This dispute, however important for the community, is not substantively crucial as it largely ignores methodological issues while treating the object matter in a variable and contextual manner (Ulicka, 2015, p. 107). This does not mean that this criterion is less important and, even more, this is where boundary setting can succeed. This can also be seen in the debate in the world literature. In other words, when attempts to indicate its boundaries based on object matter or method fail, the one that remains as a criterion of the discipline's identity is its history and organisation, with whether there is indeed any relatively consistent methodological and object matter tradition of political science thinking remaining an open and disputed question. For this reason, multi-stranded and internally complex narratives are more often pursued, creating "progressive-eclectic" histories of political science (Almond, 1996; Sulowski, 2018) that often become contentious and debated in their own right (Farr, 1988, pp. 1193–1194). This should not come as a surprise; the "memory of discipline" seems to follow the same patterns as social memory and performs similar functions legitimising some positions, choices, and objects of interest, while taking away status and criticising the others. It also gives a sense of continuity and identity (Szacka, 2006, pp. 47–58).

The reflection on Polish political science's history is deepened while well described. What is often emphasised is the inspiring and foundational thinking on matters of state and politics that emerged from the Polish School of Law of Nations and the first manifestations of the institutionalisation and organisation of research at the Krakow Academy, Vilnius Academy and Lviv University that followed. Cited as particularly important are: the establishment of the School of Political Science in 1902 and later the Diplomatic College in Lviv; the Polish School of Political Science and the School of Social and Political Science in 1911 in Kraków; the School of Political Science in 1918 in Warsaw; and then the Academy of Political Science in 1939 in Warsaw. After World War II, the organisational development of the discipline accelerated including, first of all, the creation of scientific and research units, departments and institutes – as well as the introduction of courses with a political science focus into the curricula – and, finally, the launch of the first degree programs in political science. The turn of 1989 opened up new opportunities for Polish political science, and it began to develop extremely rapidly on organisational and didactic grounds. Back in the early 1990s, politics was taught at eight universities but, by 2009, a total of 88 universities offered political science degrees (Olszewski, 2001; Krauz-Mozer et al., 2011; Wojtaszczyk, 2015). This seems all the more important because it was in the area of didactics that a relative consensus was reached on the area and boundaries of the discipline expressed in the refinement and adoption of

educational standards for the political science degree in 2007 (Ulicka, 2015, p. 104). Alongside this, the revitalised Polish Political Science Society was active, as was the Political Science Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

In the second decade of the 21st century, this development was halted and reversed, as exemplified by the decline in political science students from over 55,000 in 2004 to just over 10,000 a decade later. At the same time, the number of students in related degrees, including international relations and security, increased significantly (Ścigaj, 2016, pp. 414–416). It also had an effect on the liquidation or transformation of numerous teaching and research units in Poland. The issues are perfectly described, and there is no need to report on them further here (see: Chmaj, Żmigrodzki, 1996; Olszewski, 2001; Żukowski, 2006; Janowski, 2011; Krauz-Mozer et al., 2011; Jakubowski et al., 2013; Wojtaszczyk, 2015). What is significant, on the other hand, is that the vast majority of works on the object have been written in the 21st century. In this sense, interest in the history of political science should be seen as one element of the dispute over the identity of the discipline – the boundaries of which are defined, in this case, by organisational traditions and the widely recognised “roster of masters” (Ścigaj, 2010; Janowski, 2011). More still, according to some researchers, it is the forgetting of its own history, the constant organisational changes and the uncritical introduction of solutions developed in “Western” science that are one of the significant obstacles to the development of Polish political science and its continuing questions about its condition, status, and identity. They do not only create confusion and chaos in terms of terminology and organisation, but also derail the possibility of integration, consolidation and sustainability of the discipline (Hudzik, 2017).

It should come as no surprise that also in the field of history and organisation of political science, there have been and continue to be disputes about related disciplines, twin disciplines, as well as sub-disciplines of political science – especially those that have become separate and independent in recent years (see: Ulicka, 2015; Janusz, 2015). These issues were discussed at the Third Congress of Political Science, where special attention was paid to the autonomisation of public policies (Woźnicki, 2015), the development of communication science (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015) and the separation of international relations (Pietraś, 2015). Over time, the links with security studies have also become important. And even though, as Konstanty A. Wojtaszczyk says, the Polish tendency to establish new disciplines is fundamentally at odds with global trends (Wojtaszczyk, 2015, p. 62), the processes of autonomisation and crystallisation of new disciplines were quickly recognised in the classifications of scientific fields and disciplines in force in Poland and elsewhere (Wallas, 2015).

The classifications of fields and disciplines have often aroused objections from political scientists and for two main reasons. First, the path of separating and autonomising new disciplines on object-methodological grounds has

been questioned, as if the object of their interest or the methods used were not undertaken or used by political science. In other words, how international relations, European studies or public policies are conceptualised in Poland does not justify not treating them as disciplines that address political problems (Blok, 2020b). Second, the variation in the assignment of the discipline, once to the humanities and once to the social sciences, is also questionable. As is well-known, until 2011, political science was part of the humanities, to remain in the field of social sciences since then, and renamed “political science and administration” as of 2018 (Janusz, 2015). And while this is not an unjustified choice, especially from the perspective of aligning Polish legislation with the OECD classification, the placement of political science in the field of social sciences has been regarded by many political scientists as reductive and erroneous because it overlooks the tradition of humanistic reflection on politics – especially political thought, as well as the great legacy of normative reflection (Szlachta, 2015b, p. 217). To put it another way, Polish political science has frequently been and continues to be viewed as a humanistic and social science.

Conclusion

The dispute over the identity of political science appears to be somewhat paradoxical. The numerous statements and the frequency with which the issue is raised are not accompanied by deep divisions and sharp disputes. Leaving aside the few voices seeking the identity of political science on the object-methodological grounds, researchers differ on certain details but, nevertheless, are in general agreement on the direction of thinking. And it is this direction that, in my opinion, marks the identity of political science in Poland after five decades of reflection. It consists of the following claims:

1. Determining the identity of a discipline based on an object-methodological criterion is impossible (Karwat, 2009, pp. 187–188). The object matter of political science coincides with that of the social sciences, and the factors that distinguish political researchers are the conceptualisation of research problems, dominant linguistic categories, specific research questions and attempts to answer them.
2. The methodology of the social sciences is also common. There is no such thing as a “political science method”, which does not mean that some methods are not used more often in the research of politics and the political. Still, it is a mistake to think of them as more suited to research the political only because they are used so frequently.
3. The research object of political science is fluid, changeable, syndromatic, blurry and is better represented by the category of what is political rather than the defined concept of politics.

4. Drawing a line separating political science from other disciplines is probably impossible and certainly unnecessary. It adds little to the organisation of work, does not fundamentally change research opportunities and contradicts the idea of paradigmatic pluralism and interdisciplinarity. Moreover, the search for boundaries can lead to premature specialisation, “chunking of the work” and, thus, hinder rather than facilitate the development of the discipline (Krauz-Mozer, 2015, p. 184).
5. Political science functions in a situation of cooperation and dialogue with other disciplines on the ground of theoretical relations. It is a discipline containing different approaches and paradigms used to explain political phenomena. It also draws on the methodological and theoretical experience of other disciplines. In this sense, it is pluralistic and interdisciplinary, as well as “nonindependent in terms of providing explanation”, for the complexity of the object and the multiplicity of approaches require consideration of broader social and humanistic theories (Blok, 2020b, p. 20).
6. The disciplinary identifications of Polish political scientists are strongly defined by traditions developed in Polish universities and other research units for more than 100 years. The history and organisation of the discipline in Poland, thus, plays a great role in building its identity.

If we agree with the above remarks, then perhaps the calls that it is worthwhile to change the focus from the constant discussion of the identity of political science, including its past, to the challenges and threats it faces to reformulate the foundations of the discipline in an era of declining interest in the research and exhaustion of the development path associated with the organisation of new centres and expansion of teaching offerings are accurate (Potulski, 2017).

In conclusion, the identity disputes in Polish political science have led to points where, accepting the variability, complexity, multiplicity, and diversity of perspectives, we do not ultimately give up such use of them – which will be subordinated to the political science perspective expressed in the ways of conceptualisation, language, questions posed. This is what sets us apart – albeit always incidentally, contextually, relative to research – from other disciplines. This is what sets the disciplines apart from each other in general.

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