

Introduction:

A Round-up of the Achievements of Polish Theoretical Political Science

For more than 50 years, theoretical political scientists have been co-shaping the identity of Polish political science, constituting its strength, setting the directions of scientific exploration, and preparing the ground for new scientific research. Theoretical works on the theory of politics in general have been crucial to the development of political science in the Polish scientific establishment from the very beginning. They have often given the discipline a needed dynamic, responding to the needs of the political science community. Examples of such attempts were the long-standing research of “the political” or the search for an integral theory of politics, intended to stop the discipline’s “fragmentation” into numerous (sub)disciplines. This division of discipline was often purely ambition-based, co-created and driven by institutional-administrative interests. Theoretical researchers have opposed such tendencies, recognising that continuing the process would limit the chances of understanding politics. The development of integral theory was based on the belief that without its support, political scientists could not understand the narrowed research object. Consequently, the activities of political theorists in the last half century not only focused on the development of theoretical tools of political science but stimulated the development of the discipline.

The theoretical output of political scientists is extremely rich both quantitatively and substantively, but its state had not been the object of scholarly reflection over the years. The initiative to draw up a “closing and opening balance” of this body of work came from Prof. Zbigniew Blok of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The core of this initiative was to propose a catalogue of problems and theoretical issues of interest to theorists and then undertake scientific reflection on these issues. Conducting such a wide-ranging analysis was intended to show both achievements and gaps in existing research. In addition, it was intended to be a kind of “opening balance” (i.e., a delineation of research perspectives for the next decades). The first stage of this idea was a scientific conference on July 5–6, 2022, organised by the Faculty of Political Science and

Journalism of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Other conferences are planned in subsequent years.

The articles in this volume of *Teoria Polityki* are from that conference and were selected because of the topic addressed; therefore, only some of the conference presentations are presented in English in this volume. All conference proceedings were included in a specially designed collective work.

The presented issue of the journal begins with an article by Paweł Ścigaj entitled “The Dispute Over the Identity of Political Science”. It reveals the main axes of the dispute over the identity of political science in Poland in the last half-century, with a particular emphasis on the period after 1989. The author is critical of the possibility of indicating the boundaries of the discipline on the grounds of a separate research object or a unique political science method. In addition, he substantiates the need to look at political science through the prism of its theoretical and methodological relationships with other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. In the next article, entitled “Methodological Dilemmas of Political Science”, Janusz Węgrzecki identifies and discusses the methodological dilemmas addressed by Polish political scientists. He focuses on the research object of political science, methodological identity, the nature of political science and to what extent it constitutes a theoretical and to what extent an empirical science. Waldemar Bulira, in the text “Specificity of Narration and Explanation in Polish Political Science”, presents the meanders of “understanding” and the application of the categories of narration and explanation in Polish political science. On the one hand, he points to the conceptualisation of the term on the ground of political sciences methodology; and on the other hand, the author discusses the main political science narratives he distinguished (i.e., liberal and critical narratives). He shows that the critical narrative is displacing the liberal political science narrative. Problems of “understanding” are the focus of Andrzej W. Jabłoński and Weronika Górnicka’s article entitled “Understanding in Political Science: A Primary, Complementary or Supplementary Task?” The conducted interpretation of the texts of Polish theorists showed the use of the “understanding” category in the concepts of interpretivism, narrativism, understanding naturalism and the integral approach. The following articles focus on the category of “the political”. Kamil Minkner, in the article entitled “‘The Political’ versus/ and Synonymous Terms. An Attempt at Theoretical Discourse Analysis” reconstructs the theoretical discourse on the use of the concept of the political and related concepts in Polish theory of politics. In turn, Magdalena Ozimek-Hanslik, in the article entitled: “Explanatory Qualities of the Concept of ‘the Political’ in Polish Political Science Research” examines “the political” as an explanatory category. She asks questions about the status of “the political” in relation to the explanatory function of the political sciences. In the following article, “Concepts in Polish Political Science Relating to Conflictual Views of ‘the Political’”, Magdalena Mikołajczyk reviews the most important theoretical concepts and using

qualitative methods answers the question to what extent they are a reception of the positions of such authors as Carl Schmitt or Chantal Mouffe, among others. The category of “the political” is referred to in the article by Łukasz Młyńczyk, entitled “Theory of Politics in Poland on the Track of Consensual Approaches to ‘the Political’”. The author aims to reconstruct the essence of “the political” in the view of the consensus, which is no longer antagonism or agonism. In addition, he shows the scientific potential of this approach to “the political” and its interpretive usefulness in comparison with other dominant approaches. In turn, Magdalena Kozub-Karkut, in the article entitled “Non-Schmittian Concept of ‘the Political’”, traces Polish theorists’ use of definitions of “the political” that do not refer to Carl Schmitt’s concept.

The last three articles deal with the body of work of political scientists on issues of “political agency”. The texts show the originality of many of the concepts developed. Dorota Drafus, in an article entitled “Agency and Political Action. The Main Theoretical Trends in Polish Political Science”, shows the existing diversity of research perspectives on the political actor, “political agency” and political participation. An emphasis is placed on showing the characteristics of agency and the principles that determine the capacity for political action and political participation. On the other hand, Piotr Borowiec, in an article entitled “Categories of ‘Political Actor’ and ‘Political Agency’ as Research Objects of Polish Political Theorists”, focuses on two theories of “political agency” by Mirosław Karwat and Andrzej Czajowski. Complementing the discussion of issues of “political agency” is an article by Joanna Wiczorek-Orlikowska entitled “Polish Political Theorists on the Position and Role of the Individual Actor in Politics”. The author reviews key approaches to the position and role of the individual in politics. She discusses the category of individual and collective political actors, the concept of causative power and contemporary approaches to “political agency”. The results of the research presented in it, once again, confirm the pluralistic outlook of Polish political scientists on the aforementioned theoretical categories.

Although it presents only a small part of the output, the set of articles presented highlights the originality of many of the concepts developed. We believe that through its presentation, some of them can inspire many other researchers.

Zbigniew Blok, Andrzej Stelmach