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THE ENLIGHTENMENT IDEA OF RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR TRUTH AND MORALITY IN POLITICS IN THE POLISH  
POLITICAL THOUGHT

In the contemporary Polish scientific literature concerning the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there are numerous analytical considerations about values such as truth and morality, which is the case inter alia in the article written by Magda Czardybon *Prawda i jej antonimy w „Powinnościach nauczyciela”* by Grzegorz Piramowicz [Truth and its antonyms in ‘The obligations of a teacher’ by Grzegorz Piramowicz<sup>1</sup>].

Nevertheless, the analysis of the notion of responsibility of the ruler for the truth in the thought of the theoreticians of the times of the First Commonwealth of Poland was not considered by researchers of that time and nowadays constitutes a space that is still being rediscovered.

The works that are particularly vital for the attempt to describe the aforementioned notion are the critical analyses of the idea of truth in politics by Hannah Arendt: *Odpowiedzialność i władza sądenia*<sup>2</sup> [Responsibility and Judgement] as well as *Prawda i polityka*<sup>3</sup> [Truth and politics].

The composition refers first and foremost to the political treatises and writings in a form close to a treaty. A political treaty is a text in a form of an extended study and with subject that is fundamental within the given domain. These are at the same time theoretical studies rather than practical digressions about politics or political system.

The body of the source material referred to in the text was written at the

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<sup>1</sup>M. CZARDYBON, *Prawda i jej antonimy w „Powinnościach nauczyciela”* Grzegorza Piramowicza, „Prace Filologiczne” 45 (2000), p. 91-99.

<sup>2</sup>H. ARENDT, *Odpowiedzialność i władza sądenia*, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>3</sup>H. ARENDT, *Prawda i polityka*, in: IDEM, *Między czasem minionym a przyszłym, Osiem ćwiczeń z myśli politycznej*, Warszawa 1994, p. 267-308.

times of the King Stanislaw August Poniatowski, namely in the 70s and 80s of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In order to set the Polish theory within the broader context of the European political philosophy, I have used comparative sources in my analysis. I consulted the writings of Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and, referring to the earlier tradition and the crucial ancient threads, I refer to the thought of Plato.

The issue analysed in the present text, appears legitimate and crucial, since in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the category of conscience becomes one of the fundamental cultural values. Rousseau attached special significance to that notion, calling to rebuild the morality on the solid foundation of the inner 'voice of the conscience'<sup>4</sup>.

The issue that is specified in such a way, focuses my investigations on the relationship between politics and moral values. By posing a question of these relationships, I assume that firstly, the theory of politics cannot be limited merely to praxeological values and, at the same time, that moral values constitute indispensable part of political theory.

The history of modern European theory of power is full of doubt concerning the possibility of governance on the basis of conscience. Political practice and the pragmatism of the theorists used to deprive the myth of a king ruling in accordance with his own conscience of extraordinary charm and immaculate purity. Such a myth sends an amazingly simple message: a monarch, who reigns in accordance with his own conscience knows, how to govern because he is perfectly aware of the ultimate aim of his reign. The voice of king's conscience will be dependent on the source of moral knowledge. This source can spring from God's command as well as from the reason. This voice will always prompt the king with what is good and what is bad. Moreover, this voice will be dependent neither on the law binding in the state nor on the opinion of other people. Thanks to this concept the cognition of good and bad became self-evident. And the notion *sumienie* [Eng: *conscience*], according to ancient tradition, used to imply moral and cognitive significance. Naturally, conduct in accordance with the conscience was a different issue, for it was dependent on the will of the ruler and had not to be obvious. As I have already mentioned it, the obligation of succumbing to the voice of the conscience has never been of a purely rational character. After all, it could have been implemented out of fear for God's

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<sup>4</sup> See: M. OSSOWSKA, *Myśl moralna oświecenia angielskiego*, Warszawa 1966, p. 214; M. KLIMOWICZ, *Problemy literatury*, in: B. LEŚNODORSKI (ed.), *Polska w epoce Oświecenia. Państwo, społeczeństwo, kultura*, Warszawa 1971, p. 276.

punishment. It could also have been the fruit of the Socratesian anxiety for self-denial or Kantesian fear for self-condemnation. Was the ideal of a king ruling in accordance with his conscience still existing at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, even though it had been fiercely criticised for three centuries?

The combination of individual knowledge and conscience predestines to conferring moral character to such a kind of power. Such a determination imposes responsibility on the ruler. The practical one – for one’s own perfection (striving towards perfection) and the one that is connected to the good of a community but above all the responsibility for promulgating truth among the governed and their morals. The question that appears amidst the above considerations is: to whom should the monarch be responsible? Should the king apply the aforementioned Socratesian formula or remain in self-conflict to avoid being at loggerheads with the whole world?

Considering human behaviour from the moral point of view that centrally situates the individual “I” means by contrast considering the very same behaviour from the political perspective, which situates the world in the centre of attention. For Socrates, it was better to suffer harm than to inflict it<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, the monarch governing in accordance with the Socratesian instructions, taking no heed of the opinion of the others, should proclaim inner truth, in accordance with his own conscience and by nature different than the voices of the others. In such a way, he would probably cause inner discrepancy, which presumably causes more suffering than his disagreement with the surrounding world. The idea of inconsistency within the domain of moral issues is bound to reappear in the modern theory. It is bound to become the foundation of Kant’s categorical imperative as an axiom of logic and ethics of non-self-sacrifice.

If one accepts the early Middle-age interpretation of king’s rule as the power serving at limiting evil and enforcing the good, he or she may easily arrive at the conclusion that the ruler is accountable to God. This issue has been presented by John of Salisbury: according to him, the ruler, who was introducing the good and destroying the evil was at the same time implementing the rule of God. The political community, defined as a personal being had not have any right to require any responsibility from the ruler, because he was on the top of the community and was responsible to God and not to the members of the *organism*, of which he was the head.

The ruler could have been responsible only to the source of any being, including the being of community, in other words: he could only have been accoun-

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<sup>5</sup> PLATON, *Gorgiasz*, in: IDEM, *Gorgiasz, Menon*, W. Witwicki (ed.), Kęty 2002, p. 64-65.

table to God<sup>6</sup>. The manner, in which the idea has been constructed, also determined the legal responsibility of the ruler only to God, because God was the only source of law.

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Poland there were many proves for the durability of these ideas. Such ideas – which is understandable – have frequently been preached by preachers: *the power of the highest Providence surrenders the nations to kings because we reckon it is an extraordinary grace for the nation; it sustains their order* – Michał Karpowicz<sup>7</sup> used to convince. The king, under the aegis of God, secured order. *The superiority of God watches over the human fortune and at best preserves their order*<sup>8</sup> – added the same preacher. The idea as such resulted directly from the charisma of power. The issue was partially presented by Adam Naruszewicz in his monarchist exposition, proving that God is the guarantor of the order in the world and thanks to charisma, the king can be the guarantor of the order in the state<sup>9</sup>.

By contrast, Wincenty Skrzetuski purported that: *whatever it is that should remain inalienable for the public, is sanctity in the human society. Therefore, the person of the ruler is sacred, because the whole state requires him to be absolutely safe*<sup>10</sup>. Starting with the necessity to secure order in the state by the monarch, Skrzetuski used to sanctify him or her automatically, within the interest of the governed. It is highly likely that this seemingly original idea has merely been a travesty of the Western idea.

The time following the moment in which John of Salisbury came up with his idea till the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be presented as a constant increase in the responsibility of the ruler to the ruled. As in the Polish political theory, Hugo Kołłątaj develops the theory of lasting and inalienable moral laws, the idea of accountability to God would be marginalized (of course in a form of a modern theory). God was superseded from the world of moral values, since he has no longer been perceived as the guarantor of moral order. The secular ethics was created, which was nevertheless not denying the creative role of God in the act of ethical order<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> B. SZLACHTA, *Monarchia prawa. Szkice z historii angielskiej myśli politycznej do końca epoki Plantagenetów*, Kraków 2001, p. 100-103.

<sup>7</sup> M. KARPOWICZ, *O władzy Boskiej nad rządami ludzkiego narodu. Kazanie w uroczystość pamiątki koronacji Najjaśniejszego Pana Naszego Miłościwego króla Stanisława Augusta, 25 listopada 1789 roku*, Wilno 1789, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 22. Analogiczny wywód u Józefa Wybickiego, See: J. WYBICKI, *Listy patriotyczne*, K. Opalek (ed.), Wrocław 1955, p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> [A. NARUSZEWICZ], *Suum cuique*, „Przegląd Polski” 1869, vol. 4, p. 422-436.

<sup>10</sup> W. SKRZETUSKI, *O zachowaniu traktatów*, in: *Mowy o głównych materiach politycznych*, Warszawa 1773, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> A. ŁYSIAK, *Między religią a moralnością. Zagadnienie aksjologii w poglądach Hugona*

Kołłątaj put the blame for morality among the governed to the state, and according to him, the role of the king was marginal. Such a minimization of the influence exerted by the king upon the moral sphere of the community justifies the question whether there is still any space for personal power as the source of order somewhere in-between the God's responsibility for truth and morality and the responsibility of the state. It was a commonly held belief that the person of the king was an essential source of order; his presence in itself introduced harmony among the quarrelling parties. The political theory is characterized by the anxiety for chaos and by nature heads towards order, which ensures peace and security. Still, is it necessary for the king to be the guarantor of the order? In the modern theory there have been three concepts stating it is not.

The first one was attributed to Locke, who assumed that people are good and the order springs into existence spontaneously. They are in fact reasonable and discern the existing laws and prepared to obey the laws. Moreover, they have the capability and willingness to live according to the reason and natural laws. Power is in turn necessary only in order to cope with some imperfections of the order, which is maintained spontaneously by the people, therefore, according to Lock, the superior source of order is reason of the human beings and their decency<sup>12</sup>.

The second concept, specified as natural harmony, came into existence – as one may easily guess – thanks to Jean Jacques Rousseau. The philosopher from Geneva discredited the existing order, which is best expressed with the sentence commencing his work entitled *The Social Contract: Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains*<sup>13</sup>. The main objective of the philosophical experiments of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was not to stabilize the society but to change it.

The third idea assumed that the order depends mainly on the habits, customs and tradition. It is based mainly on the tendency to do the usual things, to think in a usual way and to respect what is immemorial. This structure (according to its proponents) will include more wisdom than any other order

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*Kołłątaja*, „Słupskie Studia Historyczne” 2001, No. 9, p. 38-40.

<sup>12</sup>Micah Schwartzman describes the rule Expressesem by Locke on the basis of the religious tolerance: See: M. SCHWARTZMAN, *The Relevance of Locke's Religious Arguments for Toleration*, „Political Theory” 33 (2005), No. 5, p. 692-697.

<sup>13</sup>J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Umowa społeczna*, Kęty 2002, p. 11. Cf. J. MARKS, *The Divine Instinct? Rousseau and Conscience*, “The Review of Politics” 68 (2006), No. 4, p. 571-579. As evidenced Jonathan Marks, this request led Rousseau to verify the ethics of power. Basing the governance on the judgments of conscience was, in this interpretation, aimed to balance of power existing support of contract for the utility of wielding power; J. MARKS, *The Divine Instinct?*, p. 573.

purposefully projected and introduced at a specific time since it will be a result of work of many generations. This idea used to harmonize with the Polish traditionalistic theory of power.

As it may be easily expected, the theories of Lock and Rousseau gained numerous proponents in Poland in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in particular among republicans, but in this context, the utterance of Michał Wielhorski, a republican and an ardent supporter of Lock and a co-worker of Rousseau, who wrote in his treatise: *About the restoration of the former government according to the elemental laws: In the country where there are so many rich houses, powerful, in the nation of the successful, among whom there is a rule of the spirit of distinction and hatred, I reckon that the first civil servant, who, I presume, is the king, it is inevitably necessary*<sup>14</sup>.

Wielhorski did not reject the ordering role of the king but described him as the first officer, which suggested the drastic reduction in the scope of his authority, planned by the author of the treatise. Surprisingly, the motive for granting the role of guarantor of order and balance in the country to the king was the hope to reduce the influence of aristocratic families and limit their splintering role in the noble society.

The power-hungry and unrestricted by any supreme authority, the aristocracy has, in the eyes of Wielhorski, led the country into anarchy, the king had to counterbalance these destructive outbreaks of lawlessness. This contestation of Wielhorski, the Enlightenment republican, may seem surprising because an akin idea can be detected among the Polish monarchists with the difference that in theory the power of this movement is to justify the patronage prerogatives of the king. The idea presented by Wielhorski – emphasizing the protective function of the king, the guardian of the community and not only the privileged social stratum – seems common in the Polish theory of power. The conviction that the king maintains the order by means of preserving the balance inside the nobility but also the stability of whole the community, as it was also noticed by Wincenty Skrzetuski: *there is an escape in the king for those oppressed by the mightier [...] he rescues the oppresses from violent designs*<sup>15</sup>. The threats connected to the lack of the stabi-

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<sup>14</sup>M. WIELHORSKI, *O przywróceniu dawnego rządu według pierwiastkowych Rzeczypospolitej ustaw*, [Paryż] 1775, p. 272. Characteristically, when Polish theorists transmitted the idea of the king-the first officer, it was not identical with absolute and Enlightenment prototype. The Polish interpretation meant only an apt administrator, committed to the country, who cares about the welfare of the community. See: S. STASZIC, *Uwagi nad życiem Jana Zamojskiego*, S. Czarnowski (ed.), Wrocław–Warszawa 2005, p. 66-69.

<sup>15</sup>W. SKRZETUSKI, *Prawo polityczne narodu polskiego*, t. I, Warszawa 1782, p. 117.

lizing role of the king have been described by monarchist theoreticians. Józef Pawlikowski proved that the king is the source of order in the state: if there was no king, the state would be in danger of *republican despotism, which is the worst, since there are numerous antagonistic despots*<sup>16</sup>. The monarchists pinpointed also the ambivalence concerning the royal order not in the decay of the state but also in the republican dictatorship of the aristocratic features.

Anthropological perspective of the natural harmony of life in a community allows to look at the theories of Rousseau from an utterly different perspective. As James Frazer proved, numerous communities claimed that the order of the nature is connected directly to the life of a king. According to this conviction, the natural death of a king *results in a common catastrophe and even the annihilation of the known world*.<sup>17</sup>

Naruszewicz supported this idea and interpreted the natural relationship between power and community, using a meaningful comparison – nations are like *swarms of bees, which collapse and extinct as soon as the leader disappears*<sup>18</sup>. In yet another volume of the historiographic work, the bishop coadjutor of Smoleńsk added that the order in the country can only be ensured by a monarch having *an absolute power over whole the Polish Republic*<sup>19</sup>. As a result the desire of order has become a reason for strengthening the monarchical power. It meant using the idea in a monarchical discourse in an instrumental manner but as it has to be acknowledged – the author of the *History of the Polish Nation* has done it consistently.

The universal comparison of the community to a swarm of bees was also applied by the proponent of the governing monarch, Andrzej Kanty Śleczkowski.

On the back of the book frontispiece of a panegyric work written for the coronation of the last Polish King *Serenissimo Ac Potentissimo Principi, Stanislao Augusto [...] Sacro Solenni, Regalis Coronationis die, Cracoviensis Scientiarum Universitas; in Dominum & Principem Suum interprete pietatis & obsequii calamo [...] Applaudi. Anno Domini 1764. Die 25. Novembris*, he presented a bullock (referring to the coat of arms of the Ponia-towscy family) as an ox. In this way, he was referring to the ancient and

<sup>16</sup> J. PAWLIKOWSKI, *Myśli polityczne dla Polski*, Warszawa 1789, p. 179.

<sup>17</sup> J.G. FRAZER, *Złota gałąź. Studia z magii i religii*, Warszawa 2002, p. 138.

<sup>18</sup> A. NARUSZEWICZ, *Historia narodu polskiego od początków chrześcijaństwa*, vol. IV, *Panowanie Piastów*, Warszawa 1783, p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> A. NARUSZEWICZ, *Historia narodu polskiego od początków chrześcijaństwa*, vol. V, *Panowanie Piastów*, Warszawa 1784, p. 242.

Biblical symbolism of the second one – as an offering animal on the altar of the prosperity of the homeland.

The offering of an ox - bullock (the death of the king for the good of the homeland) gives life to the community. Ślęczkowski presents it in a very suggestive manner: in a dead ox, there is a swarm of bees, i.e. a national community. The sacrifice made by the king in his lifetime becomes a foundation for the existence of the community. It is worth remembering that these beliefs were retold in particular within the first period of the rule of the king Stanisław August and they were spread as propaganda<sup>20</sup>.

The three theories described above which free the personal power from the responsibility for the broadly defined state (community) order can be contrasted with an idea of the modern period. The originator of this in a way contrasting theory was Hobbes. It assumes that the political order can only be ensured by rigorous laws. The rigorousness of the law is totally dependent on the main objective i.e. maintaining the public order and only the sovereign (the king) can be the guardian of the law.

Józef Wybicki appears to be the closest to the ideas presented by Hobbes. Wybicki established: the history teaches that the *dictator* [can] *himself introduce the order necessary for leading the country*<sup>21</sup>. Therefore it can be stated that the *Political thought about the civil freedom* are merely a set of random ideas gathered from the West-European treatises. Nonetheless, this courageous idea emerged in the Polish theory of power in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The law ensured order in the state, as Hobbes wanted to, and although it was not rigorous, it was unquestionable. This function of the laws was immediately connected to power. This dependency rule was presented by Józef Puszet de Puget, noticing that: *we are deeply convinced thanks to the teachings of the law that this kind of slowness* [the fact that the citizens and the inhabitants are subordinate to law and indirectly to power] *taking into account the present state of affairs* [is] *absolutely essential for preserving the order of the human community*<sup>22</sup>.

This simple and quite self-evident rule should be reminded within the

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<sup>20</sup> The descriptions of the sacrifice for the good of the country suffered by the monarch, and in particular by Stanisław August, can be found in the panegyric work of Stanisław Konarski and in the *Kazanie na mszy koronacyjnej* by Ignacy Krasicki. J. POKORA, *Obraz najjaśniejszego pana Stanisława Augusta (1764-1770). Studium z ikonografii władzy*, Warszawa 1993, p. 83, 89.

<sup>21</sup> J. WYBICKI, *Mysli polityczne o wolności cywilnej*, E. Rostworowski (ed.), Wrocław 1984, p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> J. PUSZET DE PUGET, *O uszczęśliwieniu narodu*, vol. II, *O religii*, Warszawa 1789, p. 34.



context of the considerations of the responsibility of the individual power, because, according to this interpretation – accepting the superiority of the law is connected also to accepting the superiority of the governing authorities<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, the observation of internal political solutions and their real consequences in neighbouring countries popularised the idea of the stabilising role of the king and his responsibility for the country. By contrast, Anthony Poplawski purported that monarchy guarantees order in the state, and the motive for such a thesis was gained by analogy to the realities of absolute monarchies, since it was in those systems that he saw the strength of international independence<sup>24</sup>. No wonder, the Piarist reached the conclusion that the king is indispensable for *maintaining the relationship and civil unity between the citizens*. In this case, the reality induced theoretical considerations, and the Polish anarchy appeared in contrast to the absolutist order.

In such a case: does the ruler who has a limited role in constituting order in the state bear any responsibility for enforcing truth and forming morality in the society he leads (in accordance with the systematic form)?

Contrary to the modern criticism of the individual responsibility of the ruler, the ideal was lasting, based on an ancient tradition.

For Plato, knowing the truth was one of the main goals of the mankind<sup>25</sup>, and those in power exerted too much influence upon attaining this objective and therefore were not willing to abandon it. Moreover, the needs noticeable in the states with a strong position of the king were also in favour of the ideal of the responsibility for the truth in the hands of a king. The discourse was extending and the fundamental controversy consisted in the fact the responsibility meant care for what was true and good but also in intervention in the private life of the governed and imposing the pattern of conduct. The thesis presented by Plato and concerning the fundamental significance of cognizing the truth and the immense importance of the power in this process was supported by the ancient conviction that the king is the moral leader of the nation. For this reason, the spiritual and moral principles used to have a common denominator. It is enough to acknowledge that the government bears responsibility for the moral nature of an individual? It is easy to question the moral theories because someone, who states what is good and what

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<sup>23</sup>This principle did not have the absolute, but the fundamental character. It was determined by the right to revoke the obedience to the king.

<sup>24</sup>A. POPLAWSKI, *Zbiór niektórych materii politycznych*, Warszawa 1774, p. 246.

<sup>25</sup>N. GULLEY, *Plato's Theory of Recollection*, „*The Classical Quarterly*”, New Series, 4 (1954), No. 3-4, p. 210.

is bad, expresses merely his or her personal opinion (it remains personal regardless of its absolute source), and therefore proclaims something that cannot be proved and should not be imposed on the others.

If a country is governed by the nobility, the king were imposing any specific truth and a defined moral system on his subjects, he would at the same time curtail their freedom, perceived as a lack of restrictions by the institutions of individual power. The idea that the king can define good and impose the same on subjects is permissible only in the country ruled by a king-philosopher. In any other case, it is wrong, because the king would not be perceived by the power theorists as being wiser than the governed individuals but also the power theorists had to face an extremely complex issue: even if the theory of moralizing were correct, how would one implement it? After all, any moral action must result from a free choice, while the king has only coercion at his disposal, and the deed done under the order of the king can be immoral because people have free will, so long as they choose their beliefs, even if these beliefs are false or spiritually destructive. This raises another question – whether in the theory of power developed in the country of nobility it is possible for the king to take any responsibility for truth and morality beyond the individual responsibility of his conscience?

In attaining the objective consisting in taking responsibility for the truth and morality, the king had two tools at his disposal: law and education. But should law and education be the tools, obligations (of respecting, but also enforcing the law, spreading, but also gaining education), or the limitations of the power? After all, they can effortlessly be recognized in both ways.

While the role of education in the Polish power theory stirred a heated debate, the observance of the law in the vast majority of contributions was reduced to an absolute obligation, and as a result – its limitation. Moreover, in the European legal theory of the second half of the eighteenth century, it is not difficult to discern the numerous moralistic issues, assuming that the primary purpose of the law consists in shaping the moral dimension of life. As a result, the king who educates the ruled (and who had earlier obtained absolute knowledge) and obeys the law, can be perceived as a ruler responsible for the truth and morality. Polish traditionalists expressed their judgments quite clearly: the king cannot be responsible for the truth of the community because he aims at taking his own advantage and broadening personal power. The truth cannot be protected by someone who pursues only his own goals, claimed Adam Wawrzyniec Rzewuski – *you do not have anything what could not be*

*attained or was not already attained by the king*<sup>26</sup>. For the traditionalists, the moral consciousness was the result of thought and tradition of the whole culture and not something created by the ruler. Rzewuski seemed to warn: the power by no means frees from the passions; while wielding power, it is easy to forget about your goal and seek power for its own sake.

As it seems, Rzewuski remembered the lessons of the well-known writings of Rousseau perfectly well. Rousseau claimed that it is highly doubtful that you could encounter this kind of higher intelligence, which does not succumb to passions. Yet another idea presented by Rousseau states that the ruler should know all the human passions, not being susceptible to themselves, but such a definition seems to refer to the Divine being, and not to the man who can more or less control his passions, but is not able to be fully free from them<sup>27</sup>.

It seems that Gabriel Taszycki assessed the kingly aspirations to take responsibility for the truth and morality of the governed even more critically. This radical columnist asserted that even if the country is ruled by a perfect king, it does not guarantee that he sets for himself the objectives that are chosen by the community<sup>28</sup>.

The comment made by Taszycki exposes the republican lack of confidence in the institution of monarchy. The idea of responsibility of the king for the promises had never before emerged in the Polish political thought and Taszycki represented the trends heading toward such solutions in the Republic of Poland.

These concepts were well known in Europe in the end of the eighteenth century. Rousseau foresaw even introducing posthumous courts over the

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<sup>26</sup> A.W. RZEWUSKI, *O formie rządu republikańskiego myśli*, vol. I, part 2, Warszawa 1790, p. 72. Such diagnosis can easily be found in the Polish political thinking even in the works of such theoreticians as: Stanisław Dunin-Karwicki. See: W. BERNACKI, *Myśl polityczna I Rzeczypospolitej*, Kraków 2011, p. 253.

<sup>27</sup> J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Umowa społeczna*, p. 37. It is worth to recall Plato and invert his definition, saying that the ruler, who is guided by the desire of pleasure and wealth, is a tyrant originating from the nation. He is an emanation of what the is the meanest in the human being, a symbol of the rise to power of the most lower instincts. Its aim is to satisfy their instincts. On his way he does not hesitate to use violence in order to attain his goals. He is a human being of *hybris* i.e. a man who does not obey the law except for his passions and desires. PLATON, *Państwo*, Warszawa 2010, p. 367-381. He is therefore the opposite of a king-philosopher who is not seeking any personal benefits. This kind of pessimism in the assessment of the human condition and the doubt whether a man, willing to look for his own benefit can implement the principles of justice, which were typical of Rousseau, also echoes in the works of Kant See: I. KANT, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, in: K. VORLÄNDER, F. MEINER (eds.), *Kleinere Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie, Ethik und Politik*, Hamburg 1959, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> [G. TASZYCKI], *Projekt bezkrólewia wiecznego*, b. m. [1790], p. 45.

king. Such court, just like the institutions of ancient Egypt, would evaluate the merit and faults of the ruler, and adjudicate upon the fame or infamy of the deceased monarch. It also would decide about the future of the royal children<sup>29</sup>. The scale of accountability was therefore (in the interpretation of Rousseau) very extensive. The traditionalist and radically republican ideas gave the truth a despotic nature. Adam Wawrzyniec Rzewuski or Gabriel Tazzycki were not necessarily be able to connect the despotic value with tyrannical aspirations of the royal power, and such despotic aspirations were attributed by them to any individual power, therefore, according to their interpretations, the truth and power of monarchs exclude one another.

One might ask whether the principle: *Fiat veritas, et pereat mundus* (Let there be truth, even if the world had to perish) but such a question can also be perceived as too naive and one may instead ask how numerous are the statements subordinating power to the rule of the king, and how many thinkers before the second half of the eighteenth century, clearly defined the relationship in favour of this power? In a natural way, in these considerations one should head towards the idea of Machiavelli but it seems that this idea had been expressed more explicitly by Hobbes, i.e. the theoretician, whose ideas were closer to Polish political thinkers. He ascertained that the state which is defending the peace, can repress truth for the sake of the peace and do it in the name of the interest of those promulgating the truth.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand Kant opposed Hobbes and many other modern theories and claimed that after the decline of the truth *further treading of people in this world does no longer really matter*<sup>31</sup>.

The term 'truth' itself has many meanings. Magda Czardybon, based on the analysis of *The obligations of the teacher* by Grzegorz Piramowicz distinguishes three axiological meanings of the above value. Firstly, the truth is an absolute good, general knowledge and the objective of cognition. Within a simplified meaning, the truth boils down to the principles, rules, regulation, laws.

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<sup>29</sup> J.J. ROUSSEAU, *Uwagi o rządzie polskim*, in: IDEM, *Umowa społeczna. Uwagi o rządzie polskim. Listy o widowiskach*, B. Baczek (ed.), Warszawa 1966, p. 292-295.

<sup>30</sup> T. HOBBS, *Lewiatan czyli Materia, forma i władza państwa kościelnego i świeckiego*, Cz. Znamierowski (ed.), Warszawa 1954, p. 594, 602, 613-614.

<sup>31</sup> I. KANT, *Metafizyka moralności*, E. Nowak (ed.), Warszawa 2005, p. 179. Kant claims that a lie is the biggest misdemeanour of the human nature. See: I. KANT, *Religia w obrębie samego rozumu*, A. Bobko (ed.), Kraków 2007, p. 62-63. A.C. MACINTYRE, *Prawdomówność i kłamstwo: czego możemy nauczyć się od Kanta?*, in: IDEM, *Etyka i polityka*, Warszawa 2009, p. 194-198.

Lastly, the truth, by analogy to the present meaning consisted in confronting the words with the reality<sup>32</sup>. In the light of the earlier settlements, this eighteenth-century axiological set should be completed with the truth within the meaning of unity between reality and tradition. I reckon that for the purposes of analysis of the sources one can establish the universal idea of truth for the eighteenth-century theory. Just one synthetic thesis appears to be sufficient: the aim of all knowledge (cognition of absolute good) is to gain knowledge in line with reality. The search will always be accompanied by lack of confidence, whether this knowledge is true, or maybe is just one of the many truths. Therefore, how can we specify the truth? The classical theory of truth seems to be obvious – *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*. This definition has consistently been quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, and he took it directly from Isaac Israeli. When translated into the English language – *the truth is the conformity between thought and the thing or the truth means compatibility between thing and intellect*.

It seems, however, that none of the translation does not fully reflect the Latin original. The theory of truth by Alfred Tarski is often used in Polish scientific literature the as the most comprehensive definition of truth in the history of mankind. It says that only those statements are true, which are in line with reality<sup>33</sup>. What is so momentous about the definition of Tarski that the fact that he formalized the theory of truth is referred to as the most complete definition? Perhaps he only translated the Latin definition by St. Thomas in a most accurate way. He did this by taking the truth as the logical value of sentences and relating it merely to sentences.

The anti-traditional manner of defining the truth was exceptionally characteristic for the cultural formation of the Enlightenment period. This notion was expressed by Franciszek Salezy Jezierski: *the truth should be the heritage of the reason*<sup>34</sup>. Both the truth and moral principles were subjected

<sup>32</sup> M. CZARDYBON, *Prawda*, p. 93.

<sup>33</sup> A. TARSKI, *Pisma logiczno-filozoficzne*, vol. I: *Prawda*, J. Zygmunt (ed.), Warszawa 1995, p. 9-12, 58-60. See: J.A. STUCHLIŃSKI, *Definicja zdania prawdziwego w języku logiki i w językach opartych na logice*, Warszawa 2002, p. 218-222. The definition was perfectly translated to the 'language of politics' by Hannah Arendt, writing: *w aspekcie pojęciowym, prawdę możemy nazwać to, czego nie możemy zmienić*. [Eng: *in the notion-related aspect the truth is what we cannot change*], H. ARENDT, *Prawda i polityka*, p. 308.

<sup>34</sup> F.S. JEZIERSKI, *Ktoś piszący z Warszawy*, in: IDEM, *Wybór pism*, Z. Skwarczyński (ed.), Warszawa 1952, p. 122. Analogic idea of truth as unity between reason and the national stance is also discernable on the poem by a priest, Urban Szostowicz. See: U. SZOSTOWICZ, *Do najjaśniejszego Pana od młodzi Collegium Nobilium warszawskiego Scholarum Piarum przytomnością Pańską udarowanej podczas danego z rocznej aplikacji dowodu*, „Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne”

to rational choice. For such thinkers as Jezierski, the ethics became the study of the concept and the ethical stance had the character of a rational decision.

This phenomenon has been well studied by historians of philosophy. They argue that in the Enlightenment period as the truth seems to be perceived as something identical with the scientific system and the morality seems to be derived from the laws of reason. The philosophical justification of rationality of moral conduct was introduced by Immanuel Kant<sup>35</sup>.

But it must also be remembered that as a result of the more extensive discussion at the end of the eighteenth century, the morality was subject to a process of relativization. This was primarily through mockery of naivety and general discussion on whether defects or virtues are more significant to the good of the humanity.

The dimension of truth in politics is a notion extensive both in time and in space.

It should be recognized first of all with the Platonic consent to the king to resort to lies<sup>36</sup>. The philosopher justified this attitude with the good of the state. This kind of justification gave rise to the idea which is reappearing in the theory of power until the present day. The idea that can be summarized with a short sentence: the last criterion of the truth is the collective rule of utility<sup>37</sup>. This discussion about the truth in politics (with full awareness of the fact that this discussion has no end) can end with a bitter reflection on Hannah Arendt, that truth is powerless in the political practice. As a consequence of this statement, Arendt asks rhetorically: if the government does not attach meaning to the truth, is the truth, that is created by the power, not equally contemptible as the power<sup>38</sup>? According to Arendt, a torchbearer of the truth will never be a man of action, as opposed to a liar<sup>39</sup>.

The extreme pessimism of the author of *Truth and policy* stems from the conviction about the truth little impact on changing the existing conditions. If

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ne" 1776, vol. 14, part 1, p. 76-83.

<sup>35</sup> M. HORKHEIMER, T. ADORNO, *Dialektyka oświecenia*, Warszawa 1994, p. 102-103.

<sup>36</sup> „Rządzący w państwie mają prawo kłamać; albo w stosunku do wrogów, albo własnych obywateli, dla dobra państwa”. PLATON, *Państwo*, p. 109.

<sup>37</sup> In this thesis involves a direct request of the effectiveness of the policy. The effectiveness becomes a paramount reason for political action. As evidenced by Ewa Nowicka-Włodarczyk, the first victim of such reasoning is truth and the lie begins to be regarded as a natural phenomenon. See: E. NOWICKA-WŁODARCZYK, *Etyka i polityka*, in: E. NOWICKA-WŁODARCZYK (ed.), *Etyka i polityka*, Kraków 1998, p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> H. ARENDT, *Prawda i polityka*, p. 268.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 293.

we consider that precisely those changes are the most important political actions, the truth will not be the most appreciated value in politics, and thus – in political theory.

This universal conviction leads to the thesis that the truth has never been and will never be a political virtue. The analysis of the sources of the second half of the eighteenth century confirms this kind of pessimism. The Polish theorists (those viewing republican ideas in traditional terms, as well as those inclining towards the Enlightenment interpretation, as well as monarchists) had not demanded conformity between the reality and his words from the king. The issue of accountability of the individual for the truth is marginal in the Polish theory of power.

Tracking the history of ideas, it would be difficult for me to judge the value of truth in the political practice but also in the modern history of Europe within the area where ideas and practice meet. It at times happened that the value of the truth gained prominence only for appearances and creation.

It is at best proven by the adventure of some imprudent ambassador. In 1604 the ambassador of the English King James I, Sir Henry Wotton, went on a diplomatic mission to Venice. On his way, he stopped in Augsburg. In the visitor's book, in this city, he entered a brilliant aphorism: *An ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country.*

After eight years since this trivial event, the note drew the attention of an anonymous English traveller. The information about the entry reached the English court and the content of the entry reached King James I. The king felt offended by the implication that he sends ambassadors who lie to their interlocutors and friends of the king. And the ambassador Wotton had to humble himself and apologize to King James for the expression of this kind of untypical opinion of the royal diplomacy<sup>40</sup>. This indicates that power, which is obvious and understandable, was extremely anxious to avoid accusations of lying.

The common belief the truth was one of the guiding principles of power. Even an innocent questioning of this rule caused a disproportionate reaction of the monarch; it was the case despite the fact that political lie was one of the main tools at the service of diplomacy.

It seems that there can be no separation of politics from morality, as long as the goals set before the ruler correspond to the expectations of the public. This relationship easily translates into the practice of political action: if the

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<sup>40</sup>“An Ambassador is an honest man, sent to lie abroad for the good of his country”. See: G.D. RAWNSLEY, *Diplomacy and Propaganda*, “Issues and Studies” 2000, No. 3, p. 5.

main objective of the king was preserving the tradition, he would be called a defender of the truth by traditionalists, while in the Polish theory it was inadmissible for the ruler to use force to coerce the disobedient ruled to return to the path of truth.

This prohibition preventing the ruler from meddling with the conscience of another man had at least two dimensions. The first was sacred: because only God judges about such issues. Therefore, a Christian king should show tolerance towards all the governed, who show their respect towards him and honour his authority. The second perspective, the political one, was a derivative of freedom and noble equality.

The Polish theory was dominated by the conviction that if the king is to fulfil his moral obligation, he can not resort to coercion, but to an example<sup>41</sup>, by means of education and respect for the law, and not resorting to fear. All these aspects of the Polish power theory had not made the king responsible for the truth and morality. The governed expected him to set an example for them. They wanted to have a king, whose footsteps they follow, and not a ruler guarding the truth and morality, and therefore they have not expected any special actions of the king within this area.

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<sup>41</sup>Wybicki used to write about the model of the law-abiding monarch, thanks to whom the collapsing moral order can easily be restored. J. WYBICKI, *Listy patriotyczne*, p. 117.



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OŚWIECENIOWA IDEA ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚCI  
ZA PRAWDĘ I MORALNOŚĆ W POLITYCE  
W POLSKIEJ MYŚLI POLITYCZNEJ

STRESZCZENIE

W XVIII wieku kategoria sumienia stała się jedną z podstawowych wartości kulturowych Europy. Przez to istotnym zaczęła być relacja pomiędzy polityką a wartościami moralnymi. Jednak wcześniejsza, nowożytna europejska teoria polityczna stała w opozycji do idei sprawowania rządów opierając się na sumieniu, dlatego przedoświeceniowe kategorie prawdy i moralności nie stanowiły znaczących wartości politycznych. W polskiej myśli politycznej II połowy XVIII wieku domino wało przeświadczenie, że nie można oddzielić polityki od moralności. Ale niechęć do wtrącania się władcy do spraw sumienia, wsparta na wartościach szlacheckiej wolności oraz równości, powodowała, że polscy autorzy tekstów z zakresu teorii politycznej nie czynili króla odpowiedzialnym za prawdę i moralność.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT IDEA OF RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR TRUTH AND MORALITY  
IN POLITICS IN THE POLISH POLITICAL THOUGHT

SUMMARY

In the 18th century the category of conscience became one of the rudimentary cultural values in Europe. For this reason, the relationship between politics and moral values became vital. However the earlier, modern European political theory was in opposition to the idea of governing on the basis of conscience, which is why the categories of truth and morality from the pre-Enlightenment period did not constitute any significant political values. In the Polish

political thought of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was the conviction that the politics cannot be separated from morality. Nonetheless the unwillingness of the king to interfere with the issues of the conscience, based on the values of the noble freedom and equality resulted in the fact that the Polish authors of the texts within the scope of the political theory had not made the king responsible for the truth and morality.

**Key words:** Enlightenment political theory, values of truth and morality in politics, Polish political theory of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century