



## Introduction to the issue: *Intellectuals and politics*

The dilemmas whether philosophers ought to commit politically, and to which extent intellectuals should become actively involved in public life were considered in May 2021 by the participants of the conference *W drodze do Syrakuz* [On the way to Syracuse], organized jointly by scholars from Jagiellonian University and Pedagogical University of Krakow. Now, editors of the present issue, devoted to “Intellectuals and politics”, include some of the papers presented, in an earlier version, during this conference. The leading theme is also addressed by several other contributors who discuss it, more or less directly, in terms of ethics, aesthetics and philosophical anthropology.

When Plato first set off for Syracuse, he wrote: “I ultimately inclined to the view that if we were ever to attempt to realize our theories concerning laws and government, now was the time to undertake [the journey]” (Plato, 1966: 328bc).<sup>1</sup> He assumed that “the classes of mankind will have no cessation from evils until either the class of those who are right and true philosophers attains political supremacy, or else the class of those who hold power in the States becomes, by some dispensation of Heaven, really philosophic” (Plato, 1966: 326ab). As if following Plato, the representatives of successive generations of thinkers chose the path to their own Syracuse, deciding to engage directly in public life, creating their visions of society, or recognizing that it is better to stay away from the public sphere. We owe them models of the social contract, theories of justice, ways of organizing the state, defining the relationship between the authorities and citizens, and finally the system of law and the division of powers. Today, in many ways we pose questions about the involvement of philosophers — or more broadly, intellectuals — in public life. We are considering their responsibility for the state or towards the state; for the shape of the social order; and even for the policies of specific governments, when they decide to become fully and personally involved in politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Plato. (1966). *Plato in twelve volumes* (vol. 7). (R.G. Bury, Trans.). London: William Heinemann Ltd. Retrieved from: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/> (10.06.2022).

Andrzej Waśkiewicz, the author of the first paper addressing the leading theme of the issue, entitled *Próby de Montaigne'a, czyli apologia życia prywatnego* [De Montaigne's *Essays*, or the apology of private life], claims that although the French philosopher lived his life outside society, he did not expect others to follow him in this respect and he consistently avoided any kind of categorical moralising or viewing human life in terms of obligations. Rafał Wonicki in his article on *Rola intelektualistów w polis. Rozważania o Hieronie Ksenofonta* [The role of intellectuals in *polis*. Reflections on Xenophon's *Hiéron*], refers to Leo Strauss' interpretation of Xenophon's idea of tyranny, arguing that such comparison may be helpful in problematizing the role of contemporary intellectuals who try to implement the ideas of beauty, good and justice in the political context. The main focus of Jacek Brezczko's paper, entitled *Kim jest klerk i na czym polega jego zdrada* [Who is a clerk and what his betrayal consists in], is the concept of Julien Bendy's *The betrayal of the soulful intellectuals*. According to Brezczko, the betrayal of the soulful intellectual consists in giving up the supreme goal, that is to understand the universe, and sacrificing it "politically" by subordinating and adjusting metaphysics to the philosophy of politics. Valeriu-Mihai Pănoiu, the author of the paper on *Ad hominem and false analogy abuses in a Romanian intellectual debate*, presents the pragma-dialectical inside view of a Romanian intellectual debate, ranging from post-communist issues to political correctness.

The following five articles do not relate directly to the leading theme. Agata Łukomska, in her paper entitled *Moralność wyalienowana. Bernarda Williama krytyka utylityzmu* [Alienated morality: Bernard Williams' critique of utilitarianism], discusses Williams' arguments against the effectiveness of the notion of utility as a source of moral motivation. Filip Stawski, author of the next paper, *Koncepcja enkulturacji w perspektywie kognitywistycznej* [Enculturation in cognitive studies perspective], argues that the concept of enculturation, as part of the situated cognition, can be enriched with the idea of affordances, in particular cultural and conventional affordances. He considers the possible neurobiological mechanism of enculturation and suggests that this approach fits in the 4E programmes. Krzysztof Sękowski's article, *The concept of intuition in experimental philosophy*, focuses on the theoretical assumptions and the research practice of the representatives of experimental philosophy. Regarding the concept of intuition — central for experimental philosophy, though still far from being clear — he shows that the only coherent condition is an etiological one, as the mental state that could be classified as intuition has to be shaped by pragmatic, and not only semantic factors. The next article by Grzegorz Polak, *Does the not-Self (anattā) teaching in the Nikāyas presuppose the existence of a special type of consciousness?*, critically considers a hypothesis that the early Buddhist texts presuppose the existence of a special type of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) which cannot be identified with any of the five aggregates

(*khandha*-s) constituting human being. Polak argues that despite its advantage over the historically dominant interpretation of *anattā* teaching, this hypothesis is nonetheless problematic on many levels. In order to make better sense of the problems in question, he considers certain parallels of the Nikāya doctrine with modern philosophy of mind as well as with Indian Sāṃkhya doctrine. William Wood, in his paper entitled *Three candidates for first philosophy in Nietzsche's Beyond good and evil 20–22*, focuses on the three Nietzsche's aphorisms (*BGE* 20–22). He argues that they form an interconnected sequence, in which the German thinker rejects three traditional candidates for first philosophy — cosmology (*BGE* 20), theology (*BGE* 21) and general ontology (*BGE* 22). By rejecting them Nietzsche clears the way for psychology which, as he persuades, ought to be recognised as the true candidate for first philosophy.

In the next column, “Debates”, we present a transcript of the debate *Czy powrót do Syrakuz jest możliwy? [Is it possible to return to Syracuse?]*, conducted during the above mentioned conference. It was dedicated to the idea of traveling to our own Syracuse or stopping halfway, and the resulting practice to implement. Invited guests — Adam Chmielewski, Janusz Majcherek, Andrzej Szahaj, Henryk Woźniakowski and Jan Rokita — together with the moderator of the debate, Piotr Bartula, not only take readers on the way to modern Syracuse but also reflect on the role that philosophers play in today's public sphere. Referring both to the historical examples and the experiences of contemporary communities, the debaters pinpoint the practical implications and ethical challenges of the political engagement of intellectuals and philosophers.

The subsequent column, “Polemics”, consists of three papers and a transcript of the debate conducted during the above mentioned conference. The first contribution by Zoltán Somhegyi, *Avant-garde anatomy...*, is a study of the thought-provoking work of Milorad Krstić. This Yugoslavian-born and since 1989 Hungary-based visual artist creates new cross-references between instances of history, politics, society, technology, psychology, art and aesthetics, etc. His art is based on the creative re-use of the fragments of history, the cross-connections between phenomena in the world of art, and the ceaseless references to actual pieces as well as the creative re-assembling of all these elements. The second paper in this column by Marcin Urbaniak, *Bioetyczne uzasadnienie udoskonalania człowieka...* [Bioethical justification for human improvement], discusses the transhumanist perspective on evolution, and considers John Harris' views, presented in his *Enhancing evolution* recently published in Polish translation (2021), in a wider context of the ongoing anthropological and ethical debate. While doing so Urbaniak addresses some of the crucial issues at the interface of modern technologies, medical progress and bioethical challenges. Another polemical review of the same book is authored by Wojciech Hanuszkiewicz, *Etyka — ewolucja — utopia...* [Ethics — evolution — utopia]. Hanuszkiewicz argues that the project of enhancing evolution, which

implies replacing natural selection with deliberate selection, is based on misunderstanding of the scientifically defined theory of evolution. He also shows that Harris' argument may serve as a classic example of a utopian discourse in which a pseudoscientific narrative is mixed with a quasi-religious belief.

The leading theme, "Intellectuals and politics", is addressed by Piotr Bartula in his essayistic paper, *Spółeczne/aspołeczne* [Social/asocial], which opens the column "PhilosOFFer's lence". Another paper entitled *Filozofia religii a nowoczesna myśl teatralna — brakujący element* [Philosophy of religion and modern theatrical thought — the missing element] by Anna Kawalec, explores some overlapping questions of the philosophy of religion and contemporary theatre studies, with emphasis on two Polish figures, Jerzy Grotowski and Karol Wojtyła.

The current issue also includes two conference reports, one from the conference *W drodze do Syrakuz* [On the way to Syracuse], held in Kraków, 28–29 May 2021 (by Tomasz Borycki), and one co-authored by Łukasz Kołoczek and Antoni Płoszczyniec, who summarise the talks and discussions conducted during the symposium: *Czym jest filozofia dzisiaj?* [What is philosophy today?], which took place in Kraków, 18.03.2022. An finally, Maciej Czyszczon closes the issue with a book note where he critically reviews a volume *Machine law, ethics, and morality in the age of artificial intelligence* (2021), edited by Steven J. Thompson.

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