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It is possible to propose one more answer which we have yet to consider on the question of why the author of *The Main Currents of Marxism* is not at the center of academic debate today. Despite the efforts of his interpreters, it is impossible to place Kołakowski in the category of those thorough philosophical hedgehogs who are developing a single thought throughout their entire lives: dealing with a single question. After all he did not create his own, elaborated theory of evil (similarly to the theory of religion), which one could attach to his name and commit to academic study. In Tokarski's reading too, he did not accomplish this. The oft-repeated thesis that modern culture is laced with a hope for erasing earthly evil from our world, seems quite questionable. The crisis of utopian thinking, diagnosed by Kołakowski attests to quite the contrary. In a world without utopia, the hope for defeating evil is also absent. The ubiquity of evil is constantly being confirmed at any film festival, confronting us with a paralyzing image of earthly suffering – in war, in politics and in family life.

At the same time, it is hard to believe that Kołakowski will no longer be read. Both his weakness and his strengths are accounted for by the fox-like nature of the author of *The Presence of Myth*. Even if some of the philosophical-political issues Kołakowski undertook seem to be, at least at the moment, irrelevant, his wonderful historical and religious-metaphysical works still remain lively. Perhaps the epoch has ended when most of the Polish intelligentsia defined itself through the spiritual mood of *kołakowskiism*. However, I am convinced that the intellectual journey of Leszek Kołakowski will continue to stir emotion and unease among the next generation of authors. Jan Tokarski's *The Presence of Evil* is evidence of that. I think that in a short time subsequent works of this sort will appear.

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Piotr Augustyniak, *Homo polacus. Eseje o polskiej duszy* [Essays on the Polish Spirit], Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2015

It is not a large volume. However, in its small format of 180 pages, extraordinarily it managed to fit a substantial story about twentieth century Polish intellectuals' struggles with Polish identity, history, and culture. The underlying theme of the essays collected here is a portrayal of various ideological strategies, arising as a result of the confrontation of Poles with the modern world. The book is thick with ideas, full of meanings and symbols, associations and revelations. It has two dimensions, two narratives that complete each other. The first and essential [narrative], is a passionate, but at the same

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time clever, and empathetic pamphlet on Polishness [polskość] – the author's critical view on Polish mentality, self-knowledge, culture, and politics; on everything that causes the conviction among Poles that they do not fit into the modern world, either because of their insurmountable backwardness and marginality, or because of some kind of unique, and for others incomprehensible, inheritance deciding their unusual historical destiny. The Polish idea – which the Kraków-based philosopher and journalist examines in his book – falls between proud messianism and the full despair of nihilism. The second dimension of this book is a landscape painted with the help of the historiography of histories of Polish self-knowledge in the last and current centuries. The work, split up into many voices, covers the meanderings of Polish national ideology in the works of writers, thinkers, and politicians.

The fundamental conviction of the author is clear. He thinks that involvement in Polishness, or to put it more simply, being a Pole is a state which most often paralyzes creative strengths, preventing the development of a person as an individual and their participation in the community in the aspirations and dilemmas of the modern world. This issue is well known, but still key both for Poland and for other geographically and historically liminal nations. In the cases considered by Piotr Augustyniak the issue of modernizing thought – the formations of national ideology and self-knowledge – dominates in such a way that present-day Poland was not only a caricatured imitation of modern life. The author carries on a dialogue and debate with more or less known twentieth century intellectuals, or rather their individual works and statements which unveil the minutiae of Polish identity in its various complications, problems, and failures.

I think that the collected essays in this book form a full significant structure. Its axis rest on three texts dedicated to the ideas of the philosopher and moralist rev. Józef Tischner, showing the important obstacles obstructing Poles historical existence. In the diagnoses formulated by Tischner, the author searches for prescriptions mainly among writers, inter alia with Jan Józef Szczepański, Joseph Conrad [Korzeniowski], Witold Gombrowicz, Andrzej Bobkowski, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. Józef Piłsudski also aspires to be a part of his group, though he lacks the self-ironic distance in himself as a Pole necessary for restraint. The next distinct character is Stanisław Brzozowski – in my opinion, the most important inspiration for Augustyniak. The author of *The Legend of Young Poland* [*Legenda Młodej Polski*] appears *explicite* in the context of polemics with Henryk Sienkiewicz and in the context of Tischner's considerations of the Polish August 1980, but his ghost is also present – such is my impression – in other essays. The remaining protagonists – but we must be reminded that here the protagonists are actual texts and not people taken in full account of their lives, thoughts and output – are the creators of ancillary and complimentary diagnoses, themselves often experiencing and expressing diagnosed sorrows.

The essay that opens the book may seem as if it does not fit, because its main protagonist is... Friedrich Nietzsche; the German and practically the embodiment of the

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apex of the 19th century! But its incongruity is only an illusion, because after all the author of *The Antichrist* wanted to think of himself as a Pole, and his thought described and defined the century at the threshold of which he died. And he also dug up the deepest problem, which is practically at the source of other sicknesses of the Polish spirit. He discovered the sources of our insecurity. This insecurity is an aspiration for the West, modernity, the emancipation of groups and individuals, however this [insecurity] goes hand in hand with a historical resentment, the burden of prejudices and superstitions. And the sources are even more fundamental: it is the antinomy between the individual and the collectivity, between the desire for freedom and conformism that stifles it. This is what stimulates the Polish wavering between megalomania and desperation.

What drew Nietzsche to Polishness was revolt, which matured among his noble ancestors. Revolt, or rather, nonconformity of the individual in the face of the generally accepted rules and collective illusions. In the specific historico-symbolic exemplifications this revolt is above all contained in the *liberum veto*, as an expression of personal protest and refusal of the dictate of the majority, but also in the monumental figures of Copernicus, who negated the prevailing collective illusions concerning the structure of our universe and Chopin, who in the name of beauty itself rejected the non-beautiful German canons in music. A Pole then is a creature who revolts and protests, simply an undenominational Protestant. The misfortune though consists in the fact that 'Protestantism' here grapples with the conformist 'counterreformation', for there exist in the Polish soul innumerable reserves of aversion in regards to freedom and criticism. This is why the 'Protestant' is ultimately vanquished by the 'Catholic' who prefers commonness, collectivity, community, and unanimity above the individual. It's too bad that neither Nietzsche nor Augustyniak cleverly reading him, discern one more hook: the principle of *liberum veto* could be understood in two ways. Either 'liberally', as defending the individual voice in front of the tyranny of majority, or in a 'totalitarian' manner, as the pursuance towards decision making solely based on the principle of unanimity, where there is no room for the rights of a minority nor *votum separatum*.

Nietzsche diagnoses the basic entanglement of the Polish ideology colliding with modernity: the conviction that revolt and protest have an uncreative character, that freedom is destructive, that everything which finds itself outside of our community, that is, the whole world, is threatening, hostile, and foreign. Later, a Polish-style *Homo Sovieticus* will be born out of it. The mental type which Tischner attempted to describe and overcome in completely different times, a hundred years after Nietzsche. *Homo Sovieticus* is a somewhat universal creature that could be encountered always and everywhere. He is an eternal figure who feeds on promises and regardless of whether these are communist promises in the form of slogans about prosperity, justice, progress and peace, or promises of transformation which transported these figures into a new setting in the midst of its creation by capitalist governments, or the present, post-industrial and post-democratic promises of living at the expense of authority. The current situation in Poland shows –

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and Augustyniak sensed it very well – that Tischner's predicted dream did not come true. The thought of transitioning from the monological society (real socialism) through the dialogical society of solidarity (the carnivalesque interlude of August 1980) to a normal rule of law country as a collective of individuals who are free and responsible for themselves – turned out to be only a phantasm that is disappearing in front of our eyes.

Neither Tischner's earlier dream about a new Poland born out of the solidarity breakthrough symbolized by the August 1980 events, came through – and they were the first strikes in the socialist countries which ended successfully and not with repressions or even massacres. Referring to the consideration of the author of the 'Ethics of Solidarity' and to Brzozowski's *Legend of Young Poland*, Augustyniak comes to a conclusion that August 1980, as well as the Solidarity movement, were only a herald, a hint, a signpost towards the future. These two big events in contemporary history, are only ideological sings – exceptions, which do not have any deeper roots in Polish tradition and history. There is then this dissonance between the symbolic layer and reality. On the ideo-graphic plane it is also discernible, which seems to reflect the essayist's intuitions: in the Polish language we write the name of the labor union 'Solidarity' with a capital letter (which points to the supposed grandeur, pride and sublimity) but in quotation marks (which can suggest a certain conventionality, secondariness), however, the real solidarity – dialogue, cooperation, mutual help, sympathy... is a small letter, but with grand content and without the conventionality suggested by the quotes. Tischner in the experience of 'Solidarity'/solidarity discerns above all its dialogical nature – openness to the world, to the Other, an escape from the hide-out, an exchange of the fortress-home for an open home. However, in order to achieve that, it is necessary to pass through the school of Brzozowski: to work on oneself, to work at all, to build and rebuild one's thoughts but not only that – also one's surroundings, their living space, workplace, relationships with others... in this spirit of solidarity proper, in the spirit of collaboration, cooperation, and sensible being together of free individuals. Before it could be successful, Poland and Poles were eaten by the egotistical monster of self-interest, which hid behind the banner of the solidary spurt of the summer of 1980.

Self-interest and egotism do not have anything in common with the individualism that characterizes modernity. Poles – the author claims – cannot cope with the difficulty of individual existence, so they are escaping into self-interest. Polish-style individualism means egotism and aversion towards those who stand out from the universally accepted norm. Instead of individuality we have privacy that turns into a selfish, inbred self-interest.

The ideas and the figure of Tischner himself reveal one more paradox, or rather, the implacable mechanism of Polish mentality with its tendency for self-negation. Here the philosopher, Socratean in spirit, who with the help of irony and provocation was attempting to wake his compatriots up from an axiological snooze, consciously becomes a preacher of Polishness, a moralizer and creator of the utopia of dialogical Poland, a utopia based on an allegedly unusual ethos of work. Instead of a biting Socratean awakening and

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a call for conscious concern for one's life and world around, we receive another incarnation of Polish mythology with quasi-millenarian aspirations.

Augustyniak, in his essays, analyzes specific elements of the myth of Polishness which could have been a palliative for the cruelty of the modern world or life in general, constantly and painfully biting the Poles. But equally important, and maybe even more important, are the prescriptions – ideological strategies which, changing Polish thought, could heal the wounds opened by being torn between modernizing and Occidentalizing aspirations and an obsolete state of our own self-knowledge. These prescriptions are various, just as their creators are. But I sense here a common mood, some kind of unifying direction. The essential point is to, through critical thought and the courage of independent living, get out from under the tyranny of universal rules, group behaviors, illusions and myths. Gombrowicz writes about the liberation of one's own 'I' from all kinds of possible specifications, but the liberation as such must be accomplished not through mechanical negation but through work on oneself and creativity. Liberation from Polishness is in fact creating oneself-out from Polishness in such a way that its overcoming would be a creative act deepening national pride. One must break with the myth of the chosen nation which in fact equals being possessed with the past. This means going out from Poland into the world where nature is completely different from torpid and idyllic Polish dreams. Jan Józef Szczepański and Joseph Conrad are in agreement on this: we live on endless waters of the world which are characterized by their changeability, uncertainty, diversity, while the thought of a calm dock is only a naïve delusion. At bottom it is always about the same thing: to extract oneself from the magmatic and mythical collectivity, to become an independent individual but able to work together and collaborate. The paradox of Polishness is expressed in the fact that, drowning in collective unconsciousness and illusions, Poles are simultaneously lonely and helpless.

Individualism ingrained in the Polish mentality is rather timid egotism which has little in common with distinct and autonomous life. We have individualism as a certain form of false consciousness, but we are lacking the individuality, in other words creative and bold individuals, not tethered by herd-instinct conformism. Paradoxically modern individualism – as Conrad shows it, for instance – is complementary with progressive homogenization and the blurring of differences between nations, cultures and particular people. Therefore, Poles would be a perfect example of such a collectivity, and maybe rather a motley, of individuals deprived of individuality.

In this respect the pessimism of Józef Piłsudski is striking, even more so since he is a character currently universally venerated as the Father of the Nation, who in his nearly solitary effort brought Poles back their own state. Yes, this effort could appear unique to Piłsudski because he himself was marked by a deep pessimism with regard to the abilities of his countrymen for individual transformation. To be frank, he had quite significant doubts about the chances for headstrong slaves to pierce through the collectivity towards gaining individual freedom. This is why in his own activity he consequentially complemented the

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patriotic duty with the fight for the possibility of personal development, where excessive entanglement in Polishness can constitute an obstacle. Polishness should be therefore recreated, reworked and built anew (Piłsudski is thinking similarly here to Brzozowski) or one needs to escape from Polishness – to the South of the mythical republic, as Bobkowski did, or to the dangerous oceans of real life as Conrad or Szczepański advised. It's also possible to look for an opportunity in the restitution of the familiar existential power of Roman Catholicism, which Stanisław Szczepanowski described (but also the later Brzozowski) or in throwing off romantic delusions searching for some kind of sense in the macabresque of life (Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz).

It's impossible to describe or even point out, in such a short note, every element which makes up the considerations of Piotr Augustyniak about Polish struggles with modernity. Each essay, forming a separate whole, clearly corresponds with the others in the book as well as appeals to the entire series of figures, works and ideas. The panorama of diseases and flaws of Polish life, made up of the voices of the creators called upon, was excellently deepened and filled with original insights, commentaries and conclusions. In an even greater degree, this applies to the presentation of methods of freeing oneself from Polish insecurities and miasmas. Augustyniak is not only a restorer of Polish self-knowledge, proficient in historical work, but also a passionately engaged participant in the debate which for at least two centuries forms the most important current of Polish thought.

By Michał Bohun

TRANSLATED BY Zachary Mazur AND Agata Tumiłowicz

Historia filozofii politycznej. Cześć druga [A History of Political Philosophy: Part Two], ed. By PIOTR NOWAK (Warszawa: Fundacja Augusta hr. Cieszkowskiego, 2016, pp. 1146).

Seven years ago the Count August Cieszkowski Foundation published a translation of the classic textbook *The History of Political Philosophy* edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey. 'Textbook' in the case of this work is a rather modest designation – this work stands not only as a general and systematic introduction to the history of political ideas, but also a collection of original studies written by leading scholars. This volume combines academic discipline with original independent thought, and therefore gained its position and three more editions (1963, 1972, 1987).

Last year, Polish readers received a continuation of Strauss and Cropsey's work, in keeping with its title and intention. *History of Political Philosophy: Part Two* however, was edited by another person: Piotr Nowak, who, along with Mikołaj Wiśniewski, oversaw