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**Bogdan SZLACHTA** 

Jagiellonian University in Kraków

[bogdan.szlachta@uj.edu.pl](mailto:bogdan.szlachta@uj.edu.pl)

## TWO TRADITIONS OF ENGLISH POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE POLITICAL THINKING OF “STAŃCZYCY”

**ABSTRACT** One of the most interesting groups at the turn of the 20th century was Stańczycy, active in autonomous Galicia from the late 1860s. The name of the faction was inspired by Stańczyk, the sceptical jester of Sigismund the Old, the penultimate king of the powerful Jagiellonian dynasty. This conservative group published *Przegląd Polski* (The Polish Review), which expressed opinions that were close to the governing elite of the province. Until the end of the 1860s, they drew upon utilitarian or liberal ideas and supported reforms, and later related to the ideas of British conservative thought and the ideas of Burke, while arguing the attempts of the liberal majority to introduce norms that would diminish the rights of every minority, and against irredentism, which neutralised the politics of emotions by replacing it with a sense of duty guided by political reason.

**Keywords:** conservatism, liberalism, autonomy, political independence, Catholic religion

One of the most interesting conservative groups at the turn of the 20th century was “Stańczycy,” who were active in autonomous Galicia from the 1860s, a few years after the suppression of the January Uprising (1863-1864). The name of the group was inspired by the name of the sceptical jester Stańczyk employed by Sigismund the Old, the penultimate king of the powerful Jagiellonian dynasty. They were a conservative group, mainly comprised of people who had been earlier affiliated with the “Hotel Lambert” emigration movement led by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770-1861).<sup>1</sup> The best known members of the group were the eminent historian Józef Szujski (1835-1883), Stanisław Tarnowski (1837-1917), a literary historian and rector of the Jagiellonian University, and the publicist and theatre critic Stanisław Koźmian (1836-1922). From 1866, Stańczycy published *Przegląd Polski* (The Polish Review), an influential journal which, during the period of Galician autonomy within the Austrian part of the Habsburg monarchy, expressed opinions that were close to the governing elite of the province.<sup>2</sup>

Stańczycy drew upon the ideas expressed by members of the “Kraków circle” (Margrave Aleksander Wielopolski, 1803-1877, Paweł Popiel, 1807-1892, and Antoni Zygmunt Helcel, 1808-1870), who proposed the introduction of federal government and supported reform that would *close the gap between countrymen and the enlightened stratum of society*.<sup>3</sup> They also advocated for an agreement with Ruthenians against other conservatives who denied the inhabitants of Eastern Galicia the status of a nation, and against the pro-Muscovite group “świętojurcy.”<sup>4</sup> Stańczycy advocated national autonomy in education and introducing teaching in national languages,<sup>5</sup> and, later on, changing the dualistic government (which was also dangerous to the unitary government of the separate nations in the Habsburg state). Having abandoned the idea of a Slav Federation within the federal Habsburg monarchy, Stańczycy opted for the principle of national autonomy. They relied less on the constitution of the Austrian state or the good will of the parliamentary majority (made up of Germans and/or liberals) than on Emperor Francis Joseph I’s correct assessment of the political situation. They argued that their distrust of constitutionalism and parliamentarianism arose from their pursuit of the protection of individual liberty and natural communities (including the nation) against the liberal majority’s attempts to introduce norms that would limit the rights of every minority.<sup>6</sup> Stańczycy also called for the preservation of *what was left of the national life wasted in failed uprisings*; they rejected irredentism and neutralised the politics

<sup>1</sup> Czartoryski was Tsar Alexander’s foreign minister and later a supporter of the November Uprising who, while in exile, counted on the support of France and England for the Polish cause.

<sup>2</sup> Szujski, Tarnowski, Koźmian and Ludwik Wodzicki published in *Przegląd Polski* (1869) a series of sketches *Teka Stańczyka [Stańczyk’s Folder]* which were fundamental for their group.

<sup>3</sup> S. Tarnowski, “O sesji sejmowej z r. 1865-66,” *Przegląd Polski*, vol. VII (1866).

<sup>4</sup> See B. Kalicki, “O kwestyi ruskiej,” *Przegląd Polski*, vol. II-III (1867).

<sup>5</sup> See Z. Sawczyński, “Rzecz o szkołach naszych,” *Przegląd Polski*, vol. XII (1866); vol. I (1867).

<sup>6</sup> On Stańczycy, see also M. Jaskólski, *Kaduceus polski. Myśl polityczna konserwatystów krakowskich 1866-1934*, Warszawa-Kraków 1990.

of emotions by replacing them with a sense of duty guided by political reason.<sup>7</sup> Being critical of both national history and the maximalist political programmes of previous generations, especially those connected with the Romantic traditions, they stressed the need to revive national life within the existing autonomy. Stańczycy defended the gentry, who represented the leading strata of society. In stressing the necessity of developing a “moral and material existence” and the importance of spontaneously grown social bonds and intermediary bodies, they urged a return to “what is natural and results from God’s mercy,” which is “the mystery of peace and balance” that requires the preservation of traditional institutions such as family. This also required greater input from the Roman Catholic Church as it was viewed as the foundation of any well-ordered social life that could be considered achievable in a Catholic monarchy such as the Habsburg state.<sup>8</sup>

Such is the overview of the political project of Stańczycy. More interesting than the remarks repeated in handbooks on the history of Polish political thought are studies regarding the sources of the ideas and attitudes of the authors within this group. For it is assumed that, until the mid-1860s, in discussions about the causes and the course of the failed January Uprising against Russia, which took place mainly in the Kingdom of Poland, these authors made far more frequent reference to the British utilitarian movement, which is associated with liberal ideas, than to the conservative tradition associated with the ideas of Edmund Burke, and the works of the Lake Poets and even more contemporary writers such as Disraeli or Carlyle. It has been said, and I agree, that between 1865 and 1867 (i.e., the time when their periodical was being published), Stańczycy were closer to the liberal than the conservative stance. Perhaps their connection with the form of liberalism developed by John Stuart Mill, who was extremely popular in 19th-century England, was particularly due to Tarnowski. Tarnowski was influenced by the works of authors collaborating with Czartoryski (who at the beginning of the 19th century also professed liberal ideas), especially Julian Klaczko, who was the editor of *Wiadomości Polskie* published in Paris in the 1850s. It is possible there was an intellectual affinity with Count Andrzej Zamoyski, the leader of the conservatives, who operated within the part of the Polish Kingdom that was subordinated to

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, S. Tarnowski, “Sumiennosc dziennikow i dziennikarzy,” *Przegląd Polski*, vol. VII (1869).

<sup>8</sup> Stańczycy defended the Church along with the ultramontanes who, from the 1860s, were active in Galicia and continued the work of the emigrant Zmartwychwstańcy (especially the eminent preachers Hieronim Kajsiwicz, 1812-1873, Piotr Semenenko, 1814-1886, and Jan Koźmian, 1814-1877). Koźmian edited *Przegląd Poznański* in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) and worked for the primate Mieczysław Halszka Ledóchowski; both were victims of *Kulturkampf* repressions. The ultramontanes criticised the undermining of the Christian principles by European governments who put “force before the law” and thus justified the partitioning of Poland and the denial of the Pope’s independence, which would destroy the foundation on which hope for the rebirth of the Polish nation and its political existence rested. The ultramontanes noticed an affinity between liberals and the supporters of the revolution that undermined the political order, and they regarded the fusion of centralism and revolution as being the main cause of the disasters of nineteenth-century Europe and of Polish bondage. In autonomous Galicia, the ultramontanes were grouped around *Przegląd Lwowski*, which was associated with Maurycy Dzieduszycki (1813-1877), Ludwik Dębicki (1843-1908) and Lucjan Siemieński (1807-1877), as well as the priests Walerian Kalinka (1826-1886) and Zygmunt Golian.

Russia. Zamoyski was the author of many works devoted to British and Irish social and economic institutions. It is possible that he knew and subscribed to the views expressed in the works of Antoni Szymański, who contributed in turn to *Przegląd Poznański*, the main conservative periodical of the Wielkopolska region, which was subordinated to Prussia. Szymański discussed the viability of the “English public spirit” in a state which, unlike France and the partitioning powers, did not pursue centralisation but recognised both personal freedom and the role of intermediary bodies. We could follow all of these threads of thought because they are of paramount importance for constructing a full picture of the Anglophilia present in Polish conservative thought of the 19th century, but they are not important for the purpose of this presentation, which is devoted to the two different traditions of English political thought in the works of Stańcycy. However, even if we limit ourselves to these general remarks and suppositions, we can state that the assumption that Polish conservative thinkers had a high regard for English and British traditions is legitimate. If we add that Tarnowski, one of the principal members of Stańcycy, manifested an excellent knowledge of various English traditions in his seminal work *Pisarze polityczni XVI wieku*, where he mentions not only Burke but also John Fortescue, a fifteenth century author, Richard Hooker from the sixteenth century, and Thomas Hobbes from the seventeenth century, we will further corroborate our thesis; we might even add that various English traditions were very important points of reference for Polish conservative thought in the second half of the 19th century.

The utilitarian ideas to which Stańcycy referred as late as the 1860s were known and employed by Polish authors pursuing a liberal direction, but it is usually pointed out in the literature that they linked those ideas with the assumptions of social Darwinism, which began in the 1870s. However, in the mid-1860s, Tarnowski and Wodzicki referred to the ideas of Mill, for example, in the course of an important dispute with Leon Rzewuski about the nature of representation. Rzewuski, who was classified as a “Christian socialist” and referred to the ideas of Le Play, postulated that, in elections to the national and central parliament, it should be districts rather than individuals or artificially created groups (in the form of political parties) that should be taken into consideration. Moreover, he rejected not only the “principle of the number” – the simple “aggregation” of individual votes which is so popular nowadays – but also the curial system, which was also based on the liberal “principle of the number” because it took the number of the inhabitants as the size of a constituency. Furthermore, because it took class into consideration rather than the distinction of “traditional groups of interests,” it perpetuated divisions in society. In Rzewuski’s project, the former *stany* (estates) were to be replaced not by individuals, as the liberals wanted, nor by constituencies, as some conservatives claimed, but by traditional individuals who united landowners (the nobility) with those they were supposed to shape and educate: *not artificial individuals nor individuals based on privileges, but natural individuals who united all the previous social strata into one harmonious whole*.<sup>9</sup> Tarnowski opposed Rzewuski’s

<sup>9</sup> L. Rzewuski, „O ustawie wyborczej (Odpowiedź „Przeglądowi Polskiemu)”, *Przegląd Polski*, vol. II (1866), pp. 187-188 and 181-182. See also L. Rzewuski, *Étude sur l’organisation de la société politique*,

position, accusing him of taking up Johannes Althusius' early project, which was only superficially linked with the ideas of radical Polish democrats about the rule of the people because it *derived its idea of state representation from authority* and took into consideration only *narrow and local interests* rather than *the general interests of the nation*. This was reminiscent of the apologists of monarchical absolutism in their renunciation of the *constitutional system* and the balance between rulers and the ruled, their dependence on groups that were unable to provide representation fit to cope with *the general needs of the country and to assume political power*; groups that lacked a *broad view and public spirit* and valued the interests of the ruled above the interests of the whole "political body."

By openly accusing Rzewuski of accepting the liberal "principle of the number" – albeit not applied according to the "number of individuals" ("liczba pojedynków") but to the "number of groups" ("liczba gmin") as the basic *political factors* – not only did Tarnowski claim that elections based on such a principle would *produce an unsuccessful and incommodious mixture*, but he also pointed to the fact that instead of representation, they would produce *a mixture of whites, reds and blues*. By claiming that such a "mixture" was *necessary because it is the sole guarantee that the local or temporary economic, commercial or agricultural interests will not preponderate over the general interests of the state, the nation, freedom and progress*, Tarnowski presented a project which closely resembled that of the utilitarians. By making reference to Macaulay's arguments which emphasised the beneficial role of the English system in which two political parties, one of which was like a "sail which pushed the ship of state forward," the other like a ballast giving balance and guarding against capsizing, Tarnowski considered it necessary that in elections a mixture of whites, reds and blues should be chosen not by bodies confined within themselves and within their narrow limits, but by individuals, even if their choice is based on passion, "self-interest" or their own identifiable advantage.<sup>10</sup> Tarnowski's arguments were adopted by another "Stańczyk" – Ludwik Wodzicki – who accused Rzewuski of trying to force society into a *form of an a priori designed institution*. Wodzicki argued that Rzewuski tried to apply what is *good and beneficial in the first buds of constitutional life* to a state in *full development* of this life, to sacrifice *the actual state of affairs* for the realisation of the *basic idea*, to provoke social chaos by giving *the elections over to the least educated class*. Both Tarnowski and Wodzicki recognised that the introduction of *general elections* was the basis for *constitutional representation* and the creation of electoral law which would take into account the legitimate demands *of a growing number of politically enabled citizens*. Furthermore, voting rights should take into account the *level of education of a society* and these rights should be adjusted

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Paris 1849, p. 41. Rzewuski's position is discussed by R.R. Ludwikowski in *Continuity and Change in Poland. Conservatism in Polish Political Thought*, Washington 1991, pp. 152-161.

<sup>10</sup> According to Tarnowski, Rzewuski assumed Althusius' idea that the leader derives his legitimation from the consent of constitutive elements which are primary but also are entities of objective power with the constant ability to operate in exceptional circumstances (S. Tarnowski, "Leon Rzewuski. Wspomnienie o pismach," *Przegląd Polski* vol. IV (1870), pp. 219-221; see also L. Wodzicki, „Sprawa ustawy wyborczej w Galicyi,” *Przegląd Polski*, vol. II (1866), p. 441).

according to any *objections and exceptions necessary for keeping balance* which would be impossible to keep if *the number alone were allowed to reign*; this balance was kept in spite of *the increasing number of citizens entitled to exercise their political rights*.<sup>11</sup>

In his approach to outlining the rules that would satisfy the above requirements, Wodzicki took a far more liberal position than Tarnowski. He not only referred to John Stuart Mill and Macaulay but also recommended that when deciding on the *means to defend the social order while respecting the basic understanding of things*, it is necessary to include such a requirement *that could be attained by anyone*.

Agreeing with the universalisation of the right to vote, against which the conservatives would later protest, Wodzicki recognised the tax census as its basis. He observed that a tax paid to the state is the exercise of a duty on the basis of which rights are granted. Those who have no possessions, even though they should enjoy “civil citizenship,” cannot enjoy “political citizenship” because they are indifferent to earning an income. This is testimony to the fact that their *exercise of law will be a detriment to society instead of a benefit*. Even though he considered this rule *unfair* and advocated extending it by the recognition of voting rights (regardless of the amount of tax being paid) for military people, for those who had a higher education, and for the members of *recognised scientific societies*, he postulated the abolition of the curial system and its replacement with a system of voting based on requirements *flexible enough* to adapt to the *changing conditions of society*; a system which would be devoid of the “class distinction” found in Rzewuski’s system because it replaced groups of interests bound within traditional and natural communities with groups with varying tax rates.<sup>12</sup>

After their voting project was criticised at the end of the 1860s, Stańcyczcy quickly realised that basing representation on their system of voting requirements would not yield sufficient representation as it would lead to a situation in which political parties would be regarded as the only structures which represented the opinions of those who paid adequate taxes, who were as biased towards their particular interests as the municipal councils.<sup>13</sup> This was evidenced by the positions of the representatives of the people’s parties and National Democracy, who declared themselves in favour of *the most democratic electoral reform of the Sejm*. In the course of their debate, Stańcyczcy did not deny the need to grant voting rights to more citizens; they made it clear that, in this respect, “progress” should be made *without revolution* and should facilitate the representation of those who fulfil their *social duties* and work with those at the bottom of the social hierarchy to “endow them with citizenship.”<sup>14</sup> In this debate, which indeed formed the

<sup>11</sup> L. Wodzicki, “Sprawa ustawy...,” pp. 430-433 and 446-447.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 435-437. The utilitarian project of Stańcyczcy was criticised by L. Rzewuski (“O ustawie wyborczej...,” p. 190) and Stanisław Starzyński (*Studia konstytucyjne*, vol. I: *Różne projekty reformy prawa wyborczego*, Lwów 1907, p. 69), associated with the conservative “Podolacy.” See: B. Szlachta, *Polscy konserwatyści wobec ustroju politycznego do 1939 roku*, Kraków 2000, Ch. VI.

<sup>13</sup> L. Wodzicki, “Sprawa ustawy...,” pp. 439-441. See W. Najdus, *Szkice z historii Galicji*, vol. I, *Galicja w latach 1900-1904*, Warszawa 1958, e.g., p. 341.

<sup>14</sup> See M. Bobrzyński, *Z moich pamiętników*, Wrocław-Kraków 1957, pp. 122-124, and *Mowa pośła Józefa Milewskiego...*, p. 133. See the famous writings of P. Popiel: *Choroba wieku. Wybór pism*, Kraków

mature position of Stańcyczcy from the early 1870s, the English example was frequently alluded to by referring to the position formulated by Edmund Burke. In this case, it was not so much his ideas of representation that were emphasised as the general implication of his suggestions, leading to a critical reappraisal of both natural law and of prescription, establishing the long-term meaning of interests or “the common good” as well as the “normative order” which is expressed in the law. Referencing Burke, they analysed issues such as the relation between customary law and laws established by the will of legislative organs, as well as the restrictions placed on “custom” and the legislative initiative, which resulted from the requirements of natural law and justice established by God. They also discussed the relation between the “the rule of the law” and “the rule of the people.” It was stressed that *in spite of our famous civilisation and that freedom which is so much discussed in Europe merely as a joke, with each passing day the tendency of the great states to absorb smaller ones is more clearly visible*; both Russia and Prussia, strengthened by defeating Austria, promote *the lethal deed (...) of unification*. This “state nihilism” may be averted thanks to the correct identification of *national thought, history, and the future*<sup>15</sup> – with their presentation in the representative organs – by recognising that the “rule of the law” established in England may secure its subjects against the arbitrariness of rulers. Stańcyczcy repeated Burke’s thesis that before the eighteenth century England was governed by “the rule of law” and that the glorious revolution broke out against an arbitrary king in its defence. In a similar fashion to Burke, they claimed that “the law of the dead” is binding upon the living, who are merely a bridge between earlier and future generations, and that the dead (in this case Poles) formed a normative order, a sort of a “national constitution” which should be recognised by any monarch, Polish or non-Polish, such as a Habsburg, a Hohenzollern, or a Romanov.

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2001 (devoted to the problems of socialism as a position which overemphasised the idea of class struggle), and I.S. Tarnowski: *Próby rozstroju*, Kraków 1889 (which mainly refers to a similar direction assumed by peasant groups). Also, see K. Grzybowski, *Galicja 1848-1914. Historia ustroju politycznego na tle historii ustroju Austrii*, Wrocław 1959, p. 79, and especially F. Kasperek, closely associated with Stańcyczcy, who in his work *O zastępstwie mniejszości w Reprezentacjach ludowych* (Kraków 1885, pp. 5-18) wrote that representative bodies should reflect only *the more important opinions in the country* because *popular representation* was not supposed to be a *photographic reflection of the entire population*, seen as a set of equally able (and legitimate) individuals to *form the will of the country or state*, but a *representation of regions and interests*, divided into *areas, districts and economic voting groups (of major possessions, cities, rural communities and chambers of commerce)*, without taking into consideration either the so-called free votes or limited lists or collective votes, considered as *artificial combinations*. By asking a meaningful question, *are all wild instincts of the masses to be reflected in parliament or are there to be only better elements, people of unwavering character and political sense in parliament?*, Kasperek considered the curial system as providing a *better guarantee of rationality of popular representation* than liberal “systems of representation” that would be incomprehensible for the general public. The aims of the community could be set forth and fulfilled by a representative body in collaboration with the head of state instead of an arithmetic or dull majority representing the opinions of individuals, especially the opinions of the leaders of the political parties. A body dominated by particularist parties was not fit for collaboration, but a body comprised of a majority, *intelligent and made stronger by patriotism* was, which in fact constituted a *majority in public life* and removed from influence the parties that demanded a substantial reform of the legal system merely to ingratiate themselves with the public.

<sup>15</sup> S. Tarnowski, “O adresie sejmu galicyjskiego,” *Przegląd Polski*, vol. I (1867).

They therefore demanded that this constitution should be upheld by normative acts of the highest order decreed or accepted by constituent assemblies or even legislatures.

Recommending the abandonment of Romantic ideals (which were so dear to many Poles but which were associated with “the politics of feeling” and Messianic dreams, especially with “the idea of the continuity of the uprising” professed even in emigrant communities that were considered conservative) in exchange for “the politics of reason,” Stańczycy made no further reference to utilitarian thought. The experience they gained in the debate about the nature of representation presented here led them to endorse ideas regarding the content of society and its traditional hierarchy, the role of intermediary bodies, and even the basis for normative solutions. They sought justification for their proposals in Burke. The representatives of the so-called Kraków group were familiar with Burke’s works and used his ideas as a criterion for distinguishing real conservatives (like themselves) from “false conservatives” (who were similar in thought to Joseph de Maistre). “The politics of reason” that they suggested was not “utilitarian politics” or “political utilitarianism,” although many Polish researchers with Marxist tendencies ascribed such a tone to the thinking of Stańczycy. In their case, “the politics of reason” was the protection of the group “interests” of the landowners and higher classes at the cost of the aspirations of the lower classes and loyalty towards the Habsburgs in order to secure this “interest.” It is worth mentioning that they shared the view expressed in the middle of the nineteenth century by Szymański (who was mentioned above) that “the conservative and decentralised England” enables its citizens to negotiate the general interest with the interests of individuals and local communities and intermediary bodies, including the Church; that England is *animated by the public spirit*, the revival of which was also expected in Polish lands,<sup>16</sup> perhaps with the partial support of Catholic Austria, which moved away from Joseph’s tendencies in the 1860s-1870s; that England demands respect for “just laws” and even the king and political parties have to negotiate their particular will with the “interests of the greater community”, that is, the state. Let us repeat the word state here, because this is especially important in the context of the experiences of Polish conservatives who faced political decline at the end of the eighteenth century with the partitions, failed uprisings, and the subsequent leadership of non-Polish rulers.

It appears that, at this point, the thinking of Stańczycy converged with that of Burke, which merely seems to emphasise the peculiarity of the “Polish case”: even if the ruler was a stranger to the country, he would still be required to respect Poland’s “natural constitution.” Stańczycy were not alone in their approach; in demanding the partitioning powers’ respect for laws which they viewed as having been issued, ultimately, by God, they merely imitated the approach adopted both by Czartoryski’s circle and by Wielopolski. However, because Czartoryski referred to the “norms of international justice,” Stańczycy were closer to Wielopolski, who referred to what had existed within

<sup>16</sup> A. Szymański, “O Administracyi francuskiej,” *Przegląd Poznański*, vol. IX (1848), p. 606. See also eiusdem: A. Szymański, “O Administracyi angielskiej,” *Przegląd Poznański*, vol. XI (1850), especially pp. 263-267 and A. Szymański, “O kilku starych i nowych dziełach angielskich,” *Przegląd Poznański*, vol. XI (1850), p. 90ff.

Polish society “since time immemorial” and which had been attacked in 1846 by peasants in Galicia following the orders of Austrian bureaucrats. Just as the peasants stood out against the normatively time-approved position of the nobility, and the European revolutionists stood out against an age-old order, some governments undermined the natural constitutions of the states they ruled. Stańczycy also supported oft-repeated opposition against “top-down revolution,” which allied with “bottom-up revolution” and against the alliance of the factors of “arbitrary government” and “freedom,”<sup>17</sup> against which the rule of law was set. These elements, which should not be derived from the arbitrariness of the monarch, the people, or their representatives, should, ultimately, be derived from the will of God in generic nature or in the natural constitutions of peoples (including those who were subjugated) developed over a long period of time. This law should especially justify and protect the autonomy of those older nations that had their own political existence and traditions which formed the basis of their constitutions. This law could thus become a point of reference for the politics of reason, which, according to Stańczycy, rarely ruled in Polish lands. There was not a trace of this in the *early oligarchy of the magnates and the anarchy of the nobility*; it is absent in today’s *oligarchy and demagogic anarchy*, which upholds the idea of the continuity of the institution of the *liberum veto* by applying the *liberum conspire*. The politics of reason must prevail so that *work and good manners in private life, peace and balance in social life, and stability and unity of direction in political life* can finally be honoured. Reason was supposed to set the criteria of “good will,” including political will, but it had to recognise that, without harmony between human laws and divine laws, [society] *will disintegrate and destroy itself* and that, on the one hand, *there must be a secular, human order*, and thus *authority*, and, on the other hand, *balance, harmony, happiness, and value depend on due and voluntary fulfilment of various vocations, duties, and positions which exist within social life*.<sup>18</sup> The main feature of the conservative agenda which gained recognition after the tragedy of the January Uprising was formulated by Tarnowski over several decades and combines two elements: respect for political *authority*, which – although foreign – sanctions only the law inscribed into Poles’ natural constitution, which is non-contradictory with the divine law, and respect for the duties, vocations and social positions of all those who are subject to this authority and who defend their identity. This agenda included elements that were, in a way, similar to those offered by Burke. However, it also referred to issues that were unknown to this Anglo-Irish author. Tarnowski judged people and their deeds according to whether they were *beneficial or detrimental*

<sup>17</sup> This opposition is visible even in the statement of Ludwik Dębicki, who was closer to the ultramontanes than Stańczycy. He wrote this after the defeat of France in the war with Prussia: *Everything that kept the world within certain bounds fell into ruin. The centralisation of modern states gradually destroyed the organic system of society which had the means of its own preservation (...). The state consumed within itself and destroyed the self-generated system of societies. In the place of natural institutions which had evolved over centuries, it put its own dead organs. The lust for omnipotence seized anything that remained and was ruled by itself.* („Lata Piotrowe Piusa IX,” *Przegląd Lwowski*, vol. II (1871), p. 19).

<sup>18</sup> S. Tarnowski, *Zygmunt Krasiński*, Kraków 1912, pp. 194-195, 199-200.

to the state.<sup>19</sup> He claimed that the main causes of the fall of the Commonwealth were the separation of the senate – which became a collection of particularist opinions of the families involved – and the fact that the chamber of parliament was dominated by those who believed in *the ideal of a Greek or Roman republic, misunderstood and badly applied*, which made the nobility into *a populous and the members of parliament into tribunes*. As a result, at the turn of the 17th century, the Sejm *withdrew* the nobility's *political rights and the right to own land* and questioned any authority over this class; freedom began to be taken as *particularism pushed to its ultimate limits*, and *all public duties* were negated in the name of freedom as particularism. This particularism, Tarnowski continued, facilitated the *activity of agitators* and led to such *innovations in public law as the viritim election and the liberum veto*; its effect was in fact *the negation of the state* that did not understand or *did not want to meet the needs of the knighthood*. In the end, *the interest of the state had no one to lean on and no one to defend it, because wherever the wind blew from, wherever the current flowed from, self-interest dictated that one should go with the wind, not resist the current, and one's skills recommended seizing it and seizing every popular slogan and repeating it the most loudly*. Even those who should be concerned with the good of the state, and not with winning applause, that is, the aristocracy, *had developed the art of flattering the general public in order to rise to prominence, and in the houses of senators and the nobility a tradition had developed: a school of people who were demagogues of the noble demos*. This strengthened rather than weakened particularisms and divided rather than united, attending to the fulfilment of wishes of various groups rather than moderating them against for the good of the state as a whole. This was to lead to divergent fates for Poland and the European powers. In Poland, Tarnowski concluded, *the idea of the homeland and the main interest was not focused in the king, nor in the dynasty, nor in any highest point of governmental power, nor in the Senate*, which could have offered support for the aristocratic system. The idea of the homeland and the main interest were not concentrated in the power factor but in the idea of freedom, which did not unite the fatherland but rather diffused it. *Internal freedom became the first interest of the fatherland: thus, by its very nature, everyone had to consider himself a judge and defender of this freedom, and everyone logically could, and almost had to, take his own complete personal freedom as the condition and measure of the freedom of the Commonwealth*. We lacked a centre of gravity, which in France was the King, and in England, even in the revolutions, it was the law and the government that represented it. Everyone in Poland could consider himself this centre of gravity, the representative and arbiter of the state's interest.<sup>20</sup> At the end of the 19th century, this is what Tarnowski and Stańcycy longed for: an English solution in which “the law and the government that represents it” set the measure of the actions of individuals and groups. These individuals and groups, however, do not have the particularity of their internal freedom in mind (of which “old Poles” and utilitarians were accused), nor are they enslaved by an arbitrary government or arbitrary legislator.

<sup>19</sup> S. Tarnowski, *Pisarze polityczni XVI wieku*, Kraków 1886, p. V.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 479-481.

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**Prof. Bogdan SZLACHTA** – full Professor of Humanities, lawyer and philosopher. Head of Chair of Political Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and Chair of Theory and Philosophy of Politics at the Academy Ignatianum in Krakow. Dean of the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the Jagiellonian University (2008-2016). Editor-in-chief of the serial publication “Societas” and academic journals: *Politeja. The Journal of the Faculty of International and Political Studies JU* and *Myśl Polityczna. Political Thought*. Member of Academia Europaea in London.