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Leibniz's *Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum* – legal logic at the service of politics: a study in the history of legal and political thought.

Introduction

The abdication¹ of King John II Casimir on 16 September 1668 meant not only an end to the rule of the House of Vasa but also a serious decrease in the importance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the international arena; actually, it opened the door for a further increase in foreign influence in the country, whose height would fall in the 18th century and would indirectly lead to the erasure of Poland off the map of Europe². According to R. Frost, the campaign for an *election vivente rege* under John Casimir came closer than any other attempt before the late 18th century to breaking the political stalemate which was the true source of the Commonwealth's weakness³. Hopes raised in view of the election of a new

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¹ The abdication of John II Casimir involves a political event that, even though trivial at first glance, was noticed in the memoirs of Jan Chryzostom Pasek: "(...) at last, when all the pleading and persuading had failed, Oźga [the chamberlain from Lwów] says, being greatly moved: Well, Gracious King, if you do not wish to be our King, be a brother to us then". J. Ch. Pasek, *Memoirs of the Polish baroque: the writings of Jan Chryzostom Pasek, a squire of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*, Berkeley 1976, p. 206. It is quite significant that after his abdication John II Casimir became one of the nobles. In fact, the spiritual body of King John II Casimir dies but the king's natural body stays intact. From this perspective, Oźga's words are the crowning proof of the king's two-body concept from one of the twentieth century's most important intellectual historians - Ernst Kantorowicz. For more information, see, among others, E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton 1998.

² H. Olszewski, *Sejm Rzeczypospolitej epoki oligarchii 1652 -1763*, Poznań 1966 s. 15.

³ R. Frost, *After the Deluge. Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War 1655-1660*, Cambridge 1993, p. 179.

king were also connected with unfulfilled desires to restore the Nobles' Democracy, which in the second half of the 17th century appeared only as a carefully treasured myth having nothing to do with reality. According to J. Sowa, the transformation of the Commonwealth's political system into a magnate oligarchy was not only a reorganisation of the system but also an indication of a decline into an anarchist-federalist structure⁴ which was held together only by an elective monarch⁵.

From this perspective the 1669 election of a new ruler who faced growing internal and external threats and would live up to the raised expectations, was crucial for ensuring a stable existence of the war-weary Commonwealth. In his work, R. Frost states that the 1669 election was an appropriate death-knell for the last plan to reform the Commonwealth's political system, "which might have rescued its international position before it was too late"⁶. The favourites in the race for the Polish crown – still valuable, though tarnished by John II Casimir's poor policy – were four candidates, each of whom was keenly interested in the royalty. They were all foreigners: Louis duc de Condée, his son, Henri d'Enghien, Philip Wilhelm, Duke of Neuburg, and Alexis, the son of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich of Russia⁷. A critical description of these candidacies is attributed to Mikolaj Jemiolowski, who depicted the profiles of the pretenders in a style that even Jan Chryzostom Pasek would not have been ashamed of⁸. Even La Fontaine, as J. Griard wrote, "composed a poem on election in Poland addressed to the Princess of Bavaria"⁹:

“Interest and ambition/ ‘L’interest et l’ambition
Working for the election/ Travaillent à l’élection
Of the Monarch of Poland. / Du Monarque de Pologne.
We believe here that the task/ On croit icy que la besogne

⁴ S. Płaza, *Wielkie bezkrólewia*, Kraków 1988 p. 77.

⁵ In Sowa's work, Sarmatism is explained as an ideology in the psychoanalytical sense and is identified as the main cause for the political disintegration of the Nobles' Republic. J. Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla*, Kraków 2011 ss. 243 – 246.

⁶ R. Frost, *After the Deluge. Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War 1655-1660*, Cambridge 1993, p. 171.

⁷ D. Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795*, Volume 4, Seattle 2001, p. 233.

⁸ M. Jemiołowski, *Pamiętnik Dzieje Polski Zawierający (1648-1679)*, Warszawa 2000 s. 381.

⁹ J. Griard, *The Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum: From the Concatenation of Demonstrations to a Decision Appraisal Procedure [in:] Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. M. Dascal, Tel Aviv 2008, p. 371.

Is advanced: and the spirits/ Est avancée; et les esprits
Will soon give the prize/ Font tantost accorder le prix
To the Lorrainer, then to the Moscovite/ Au Lorrain, puis au Moscovite,
Conde, Neuburg; since merit/ Condé, Nieubourg; car le merite
On all sides creates the problem (...)’/ De tous costez fait embarras (...)’

Leibniz’s Essay on Political Demonstrations for the Election of the King of Poland

The profile of the second candidate, Duke Philip William Wittelsbach of Neuburg who was married to Sigismund III Vasa’s daughter, is connected with the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz¹⁰ titled: *Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligende Rege Polonorum Novo scribendi genere ad claram certitudinem exactum, Auctore Georgio Vlicovio Lithvano, Vilnae M D LXIX* (An Essay on Political Demonstrations for the Election of the King of Poland)¹¹.

The essay was written by Leibniz in only several months at the end of 1668 and the beginning of 1669 for Baron Johann Christian von Boyneburg¹² who supported Philip William’s candidacy¹³. The author was given an extremely difficult task of making the noble electors warm up to the character of Neuburg by listing his virtues as well as of dissuading

¹⁰ This period of Leibniz’s life is described by R. Ariew: “Leibniz’s first publications, other than his university theses and dissertations, concerned politics and jurisprudence. In 1669, under the assumed name of Georgius Ulicovius Lithuanus, Leibniz wrote a treatise about the Polish Royal succession. When Johann Casimir, King of Poland, abdicated his crown in 1668, the Palatine Prince, Philip Wilhelm von Neuburg, was one of the pretenders. Leibniz argued that the Polish Republic could not make a better choice than von Neuburg”. R. Ariew, *G. W. Leibniz, life and the works* [in] *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*, ed. N. Jolley, Cambridge 1995, p. 21-22. For more information, see, among others, J. Suzuki, *Mathematics in Historical Context*, Mathematical Association of America, Washington 2009 p. 209; B. Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz: Metaphysics and Language: Metaphysics and Language*, Oxford 1986; S. Majdański, *Logika i polityka, czyli w stronę G.W. Leibniza Wzorca dowodów politycznych*, [in:] *Leibniz. Tradycja i idee nowoczesnej filozofii*, red. B. Paź, Kraków 2010, s. 289–317.

¹¹ See: G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983.

¹² “The minister of Schoenborn, John Christian von Boineburg, had just introduced the young Leibniz to the court of Mainz. Before returning as Ambassador to the Diet of Warsaw where the election would be held, Boineburg asked his protégé to write a text defending Neuburg’s candidature” See: J. Griard, *The Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum: From the Concatenation of Demonstrations to a Decision Appraisal Procedure* [in:] *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. M. Dascal, Tel Aviv 2008, p. 371.

¹³ “In Germany, a tract on Polish politics was composed by the mathematician and philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz when employed as secretary to the ambassador of the Duke of Neuburg”. N. Davies, *God’s Playground A History of Poland: Volume 1: The Origins to 1795*, Oxford 2005, p. 279.

them from voting for the other candidates¹⁴. Moreover, because of the growing aversion of the Polish nobility [*szlachta*] toward foreigners, Leibniz's book was supposed to be regarded as the work of a Lithuanian, and hence the title page of the work included the pseudonym *Georgio Vlicovio Lithvano*¹⁵. Interestingly, these initials form an anagram of the real author's name.

Leibniz carried out his mission and sent to his principal a finished manuscript in March of 1669¹⁶. Then *Specimen* was to be printed in Krolewiec (Königsberg) and used during the election sejm by the followers of Wittelsbach as a weapon in the political struggle. Unfortunately, because of a delay in the print run as well as the inexplicable behaviour of von Boyneburg, who did not come to Warsaw until 3 May 1669 and was therefore the last of the foreign envoys to present the profiles of the candidates, Leibniz's intellectual effort was thwarted¹⁷. Ultimately, only the final fragments of the German philosopher's publication were distributed; however, these fragments were of no importance as they had become lost in the mass of other propaganda pamphlets.

Yet it should be remembered that apart from serving the purpose of propaganda, Leibniz's work also included general thoughts regarding historical and political matters. The author had decided to go beyond the imposed guidelines referring to a campaign for a particular candidate and created a universal scientific work¹⁸. According to J. Griand, "instead of writing a simple apology for Neuburg and three pamphlets against each of the other candidates, he

¹⁴ For more information concerning Polish affairs in Leibniz's life and works, see, among others: M. Staszewski, *G. W. Leibniz. Jego osobistość – stosunki z Polską – jego stanowisko w rozwoju dziejowym myśli ludzkiej*, Kraków 1917; W. Voisé, *Posłowie*, [in:] G. W. Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, trad. T. Bieńkowski, Warszawa 1969 pp. 154-162.

¹⁵ W. Voisé indicates that the choice of Vilnius was not accidental. Wittelsbach was not known in the wider circles of the Polish nobility [*szlachta*]. However, in Vilnius they had heard about him before – in 1642 a collection of poems, *Bellaria Academica*, dedicated to the Duke of Neuberg was published by the Jesuits. W. Voisé, *Posłowie*, [in:] G. W. Leibniz, *Wzorzec dowodów politycznych*, translation: T. Bieńkowski, Warszawa 1969 p.154.

¹⁶ According to B. Mates, Leibniz "worked day and night the whole winter... without receiving any recompense whatever for it and produced a remarkable 360-page treatise". B. Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz: Metaphysics and Language: Metaphysics and Language*, Oxford 1986 p. 20.

¹⁷ Leibniz's work was published in mid-June after the election had already taken place. See: P. H. Smith, *The Business of Alchemy: Science and Culture in the Holy Roman Empire*, Princeton 1994, p. 132.

Leibniz, as J. Griand wrote, "starts from the facts and a given situation in order to trace, *in concreto*, the portrait of the best candidate. At the same time, he manages to abstract from the declared candidates, so that his text might not be seen as a conspiracy against any of them"¹⁸. J. Griand, *The Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum: From the Concatenation of Demonstrations to a Decision Appraisal Procedure* [in:] *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. M. Dascal, Tel Aviv 2008, p. 373.

provided an implacably reasoned text presented in an objective form”¹⁹. So, for the philosopher the 1669 election was only a starting point for deliberations on the legal and political aspects of the Polish state.

Seemingly, Leibniz’s work is internally balanced as it meets both propaganda and scientific standards but, using Foucault’s metaphor, it should be stated that this *form of balance* becomes a false precipice. Perhaps this flaw in the structure of the work caused its failure, because when it failed to be a truly powerful political weapon it could not become a paradigmatic political proposal.

Language, logic and politics

Leibniz used to be called a universal encyclopaedia, which was an allusion to his function as a librarian at the court in Hanover²⁰. Contemporarily, he would rather be called a *polymath*; nevertheless, his knowledge reached far beyond one scientific discipline²¹.

In his prologue preceding the main content of *Specimen*, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz states without coyness that *he tried out the human power on the field not yet marked by human feet*, i.e. he used the mathematical method of proving a theorem [demonstratio] in a political pamphlet²²:

*Raram novamque scribendi rationem affero, Lectores, cui utinam tam par essem ego, quam ipsa materia digna est ! Controversia, qua nunc per orbem ingenia exercentur, a cujus eventu Europae fata dependent, dedignari mihi visa est, sive inanes Oratorum argutias, sive humi repentes Scholasticorum Syllogismos*²³.

In order to vest his words with appropriate meaning, Leibniz cites a number of authorities who, just like him, craved to achieve a *masculine, concise, pure and decorated only with*

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 371.

²⁰ *Historical Dictionary of Leibniz's Philosophy*, ed. Stuart Brown, N. J. Fox, Oxford 2006, p. xxx.

²¹ For more information, see: B. Paź (red.), *Leibniz – tradycja i idee nowoczesnej filozofii*, Kraków 2010.

²² According to J. Griaud, “in the *Specimen*, Leibniz applies to politics the method that he expounded I 1666 in his *De Arte Combinatoria*”. J. Griaud, *The Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum: From the Concatenation of Demonstrations to a Decision Appraisal Procedure* [in:] *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. M. Dascal, Tel Aviv 2008 p. 379.

²³ G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983, p. 3.

forcefulness style of writing. He simultaneously mentions names such as those of Hippocrates, Euclid, Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes and Grotius, as nothing reflects an author's erudition so well as efficient employment of the *argumentum ad auctoritatem* [argument from authority]:

Venit in mentem masculum illud, breve, et tersum, et ipsa subtilitate cultum Orationis genus, quo se Hippocrates collegit, quo Euclides astrinxit, quo Aristoteles contorsit, quo admirabilis Jure consultorum veterum in Pandectis brevitatis se diffudit. Sed ipsam connexionis formam a Mathematicis petendam censui, qui soli prope mortalium nihil dicunt, quod non probent. Etiam nunc nostro saeculo certitudo earum atrium bono generis humani, exundare in caeteras scientias coepit. Princeps Galilaeus reseratis motuum claustris, naturalem scientiam nova foecunditate irrigavit. Hujus exemplo Cartesius altio rem in Metaphysicae sublimia aquae ductum, impari tamen successu, molitus est. At viringeniosissimus, Thomas Hobbes Anglus (cui Hugonem Grotium materia magis quam methodo jungas) inter plana et abrupta medius Philosophiae civili sese infudit. Quae cum duabus partibus constet, justo et utili, priorem ille persecutus est, utinam tam vere quam acute!²⁴.

At the same time, Leibniz tried to make his work as scientific in character as possible so that it would earn its valuable place in the history of political thought and would remain valid even beyond the end of the election sejm²⁵. Thus the philosopher inserted the term *Specimen* in the title, trying to direct his potential readers' attention to the fact that what they had in front of them was a mathematical model of reasoning used in politics:

Nam nec Geometrae eum in demonstrando rigorem tenent, materiae evidentia sermonis hiatus supplente. At in civilibus, tam varie contortis, nemo, nisi a summa severitate ratiocinationis, certitudinem speret. Dedimus tamen auribus aliquid, et de re nihil, de vocum geminatione nonnihil remisimus²⁶.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ According to J. Griard, Leibniz "wants to make a political prescription, to suggest who is to be elected, which candidate the nobles should elect. It is therefore not the chances of each candidate that are evaluated, but the reasons for electing them. It is for this reason that while combinatorial analysis is traditionally used in the calculation of probabilities". J. Griard, *The Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum: From the Concatenation of Demonstrations to a Decision Appraisal Procedure* [in:] *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. M. Dascal, Tel Aviv 2008 p. 378.

²⁶ G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983, p. 4.

Accepting the order for a propaganda pamphlet from Baron von Boyneburg was for Leibniz an opportunity to realise the idea of Ramon Llull²⁷. The experience of a long-standing religious war on the Italian Peninsula between the Christians and the Muslims had been for the mediaeval Catalan mathematician a benchmark for his philosophical search²⁸. This constant presence of a conflict growing for ages had made Llull take on the mission of inventing a new way to settle worldview disputes. In general, it would allow the conflicting sides to dissociate themselves from the very content of uttered and experienced judgments and opinions, which seemed impossible as no Christian would be able to win over a Muslim only on the basis of his own philosophical and religious view.

It is evident that the hypothesis regarding the impossibility of agreement with a foreigner who would be communicating in a different discourse was clearly advanced already in the Middle Ages, and Llull himself could have been a patron of the concepts of Jean Lyotard: “as distinguished from a litigation, a differend [différend] would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule)”²⁹.

However, Llull did not restrict himself to a theoretical assessment of the problem but tried to face it. He managed to construct a special device made up of charts fixed concentrically and rotating independently of one another on an axis. On the charts was a set of basic principles such as *goodness*, *greatness*, *wisdom* and *truth*, and the rules allowing to put them together. Thanks to the rotation of the charts, which allowed for 900 different combinations,

²⁷ Leibniz also wrote a thesis titled *De arte combinatoria*, which was an extended version of his first dissertation written before the author had seriously undertaken the study of mathematics. In his early work, Leibniz wanted to follow the rules of Ramon Llull. G. W. Leibniz, *O sformalizowaniu języka nauki*, translation: M. Gordon, [in:] *Filozofia matematyki. Antologia tekstów klasycznych*, Poznań 1986, p. 96.

²⁸ For more information, see, among others: A. Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull: A User's Guide*, Leiden 2007; L. Badia, J. Santanach, A. Soler, *Ramon Llull As a Vernacular Writer: Communicating a New Kind of Knowledge*, Woodbridge 2016.

²⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Différend: The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Minneapolis 1988, p. xi.

Llull – as A. Bonner states – tried to find an objective method for settling philosophical disputes³⁰. It may be stated that in his method Llull accepted the possibility that the conflicting sides may invalidate their views and accept a verdict issued by a mechanical factor that was independent of the conflicting sides. This way he certainly wanted to minimise the negative effect of mutual prejudices, which very often prevented the conflicting sides from conducting a fruitful debate. Llull realised that reaching an agreement as regards the truth required reaching an agreement as regards the rules on how to reach that truth³¹.

Although Llull did not succeed in his religious-philosophical mission, and the philosopher himself died at the hands of the Muslims, his idea of settling disputes on the basis of combinatory logic was lively discussed among mathematicians³². Leibniz, too, knew the benefits of adopting a standardisation attitude that was manifested in the search for the “metaspecimen” of a given mathematical discipline³³. This competence allowed him to believe in a quick realisation of Llull’s programme³⁴.

According to Leibniz, his *demonstratio* method was meant to change human political thought once and for all: *Nunc contractis in arctum spatiis, septis itineribus, continuo etiam nexorum sibi Soritarum filo vestigia regente, quid mirum est, etiam in labyrintho, etiam a caeco non vacillari? Id vero filum mihi ipsa demonstrandi forma est, perpetua rationum*³⁵

For Leibniz, the already mentioned command system *consisting of a chain of deliberations and made of intertwining links of presumptions* was the *thread*.

This particular meaning of political issues, which deserve a thorough mathematical analysis, was meant to be the justification for applying a new research method: *Me vero incuriae*

³⁰ A. Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull: A User's Guide*, Leiden 2007, p. 290.

³¹ *Doctor illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader*, ed. A. Bonner, Princeton 1993, p. 82.

³² See: L. Badia, J. Santanach, A. Soler, *Ramon Llull As a Vernacular Writer: Communicating a New Kind of Knowledge*, Woodbridge 2016.

³³ Leibniz’s dream finally came true in his project *characteristica universalis*. This project was combined with *calculus ratiocinator* – another of his ideas. The purpose of this project was to create a tool that would create the Encyclopedia – a compendium of all human knowledge. See: G. W. Leibniz, *O sformalizowaniu języka nauki*, tłum. M. Gordon, [in:] M. Gordon, *Leibniz*, Warszawa 1974, p. 245-246.

³⁴ *Doctor illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader*, ed. A. Bonner, Princeton, 1993, p. 42-44.

³⁵ G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983, p. 4.

*humanae admiratio perculit: qui motus corporum ad calculos revocamus, iidem motus animorum nobis intimos, nec minus certa lege constantes, obiter percurrimus; de horologio aliquo demonstrationes, de salute tot populorum declamationes habemus. Ergo impetum sumsi, eo in campo certitudinem humanam periclitandi, quem nulla pedum vestigial signant*³⁶.

The philosophical grammar that was proposed by Leibniz had to fulfil the standards set by the structure of the language of mathematics³⁷. Therefore, it could not contain any features that were typical of natural language, such as ambiguity, vagueness or semantic fickleness of the applied notions. For Leibniz, the attempt to invent a new language based on a dictionary of common philosophical notions could have provided a solution for speaking different languages:

*quando orientur controversiae, non magis disputatione opus erit inter duos philosophos, quam inter duos Computistas. Sufficiet enim calamos in manus sumere sedereque ad abacos, et sibi mutuo sibi mutuo (accito si placet amico) dicere: calculemus*³⁸.

Political work or work on politics

Leibniz was given the extremely difficult task of making the noble electors warm up to the character of Neuburg by listing his virtues as well as of dissuading them from voting for the other candidates. That is why in *Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum* the philosopher presents 60 premises that must be fulfilled by an ideal pretender to the throne and then confronts them with the particular candidacies to determine whether they conform to their actual state or not. After conducting this complete logical operation, Leibniz comes to conclusions which are supposed to determine who deserves the Polish crown:

Conclusio I: MOSCHUS utiliter non eligitur.

Conclusio II: CONDAEUS utiliter non eligitur

Conclusio III: LOTHARINGUS utiliter non eligitur

³⁶ G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983, p. 4.

³⁷ Leibniz's idea, based on a combination of language and mathematics, was analysed in: H. Święczkowska, *Język jako projekt filozoficzno-polityczny: Gottfrieda Wilhelma Leibniza "Swobodne rozważania o naprawie i ulepszeniu języka niemieckiego"*, Kraków 2008; M. Gordon, *Leibniz*, Warszawa 1974.

³⁸ W. Lenzen, *Leibniz's logic* [in:] *The Rise of Modern Logic: from Leibniz to Frege*, ed. D. M. Gabbay, J. Woods, Amsterdam 2004, p. 1.

*Conclusio IV:NEOBURGICUS utiliter eligetur*³⁹.

Having applied his mathematical method, Leibniz determined that the best candidate to the throne was Philip William, which was obvious on account of the identity of the principal⁴⁰. What is characteristic is that Leibniz does not add to *Specimen* his fifth conclusion, in which he would assert that the election of a Piast would not be beneficial. On the one hand, this could have resulted from an *a priori* rejection by Leibniz in the premise LX candidatures of Piasts as not probable enough since they were not supported by neighbouring countries. On the other hand, the length and specificity of the reasoning of premise LX suggests that an opposite claim may be equally probable: Leibniz regarded a Piast pretender so dangerous that he had to *a priori* exclude him from reasoning and the language:

PROPOS. LX.

Rex extraneus esto, seu PIASTUS ne esto.

Piastus novus est.

Omne novum periculosum, caeteris paribus,

Periculosum periculoso tempore fit Periculosius. Poloniae autem nunc status periculosus est.

Ergo Piastus nunc Periculosissimus .

Certum est novandis in Polonia rebus nullum tempus praesente incommodius esse posse.

(...)

Idem aliter:

Piastus rerum Polonicarum super extraneos peritus erit.

Ergo et defectuum Polonicorum. Ergo callebit modus nobis nocendi.

Ergo et minuendi libertatem.

Quod quis callet, id facilius potest.

Ergo Piastus facilius extraneo libertatem minuet.

Idem aliter:

³⁹ G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983, p. 84-90.

⁴⁰ According to B. Mates: "The argument is in the mathematico-deductive form, with propositions, proofs, corollaries, and conclusions. (...) after obtaining three conclusions excluding the other principal candidates, Leibniz finally reaches the end result: *Conclusio IV: Neuburgicus utiliter eligetur*". B. Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz : Metaphysics and Language: Metaphysics and Language*, Oxford 1986 p. 20.

Piastus Polonus est.

Polonus gratior Polonis.

Qui gratior, is minus suspectus.

Qui minus suspectus, minus impeditur.

Qui minus impeditur, facilius destinata efficit, seu potentior est.

Ergo Piastus facilius Extraneo libertatem minuet.

Idem aliter:

Piastus intestinus est,

Intestinus est vicinissimus,

Qui vicinissimus, idem potentissimus,

Quo quis potentior, eo periculosior libertati,

Ergo Piastus periculosissimus libertati⁴¹.

Contrary to what Leibniz was determined to prove in his *Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum*, Philip William was not disinterested in running for the Polish throne. In fact, he had many reasons to take part in the election. The permanent deadlock in domestic politics, the continuous clashes between particular oligarchic factions and John II Casimir's court and the deteriorating military-economic situation – all this together constituted a sort of invitation to neighbouring countries to unleash a baroque *danse macabre* in the Commonwealth. While the cabals related to the monarch tried to adapt the Commonwealth to the political model of *absolutus dominium* [an absolute monarchy] already existing in Western Europe, the magnate factions defended the notion of *Golden Liberty* while at the same time realising their own individual interests⁴². To sum up, it was the crisis in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth caused by the reign of John II Casimir that had led to such a large number of pretenders to the throne in the election of 1669⁴³. Among the candidates was also Duke Wittelsbach of Neuburg.

⁴¹ G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* [Complete Writings and Correspondence], *Vierte Reihe: Politische Schriften, Erster Band: 1667-1676*, Berlin 1983, p. 68-73.

⁴² W. Sadowski, *Państwo i władca w oczach szlachty. Postawy polityczne obywateli województwa lubelskiego za panowania Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego i Jana III Sobieskiego*, Lublin–Radzyń Podlaski 2008 s. 65-67.

⁴³ W. Kłaczewski, *Abdykacja Jana Kazimierza. Społeczeństwo szlacheckie wobec kryzysu politycznego lat 1667-1668*, Lublin 1993 s. 72-73.

Neuburg became interested in accession to the Polish throne around 1665, after he had formed a secret alliance regarding the legacy of John II Casimir with the Elector of Brandenburg⁴⁴. The Elector undertook to support the candidacy of Neuburg even if this would require the involvement of armed troops⁴⁵. This concept was approved not only in the Wielkopolska [Greater Poland] province, which was Neuburg's natural power base, e.g. because of its location, but also at the court of the reigning king (!). On 9 March 1668, only 2 days after the disruption of the sejm, John II Casimir signed his abdication⁴⁶, which ceased to be his need and became a necessity, and established an agreement with Philip William and Louis XIV in which he undertook to place his crown in the hands of the nation by mid-August 1668 *in order to enable the duke to be elected to the Polish throne*. The provisions of the treaty ensured the last representative of the House of Vasa a lifetime income paid out by Louis XIV from the date of abdication, regardless of whether the Duke of Neuburg would be chosen as king or not⁴⁷. John II Casimir kept his promise and abdicated from the throne, though he missed the date by a month.

Another important factor acting in favour of the upcoming election of Neuburg was the conclusion of a treaty between Sweden and Brandenburg on 2 July 1667 in which both sides agreed to protect (!) the current political system of the Commonwealth. Neuburg's ascension to the throne was a guarantor of those provisions because in view of his certain personal qualities he would not act as a sovereign ruler but rather as a king partly dependent on the Elector of Brandenburg. Such a perspective of rule explicitly shatters the panegyric assessment of Wittelsbach's candidacy as provided by Leibniz. The historiosophical hope contained in the question: "*What if Neuburg had been elected king?*" becomes completely dispelled and disappears in the mists of 17th-century noble diplomacy, which does not comprehend the subtlety of the language of logic.

⁴⁴ D. McKay, *Small-power diplomacy in the age of Louis XIV: the foreign policy of the Great Elector during the 1660s and 1670s*, [in:] *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs, H. M. Scott, Cambridge 1997 p. 197.

⁴⁵ A. Kaminska, *Brandenburg-Prussia and Poland: 1669-1672*, Marburg 1983, p.1-2.

⁴⁶ W. Czermak, *Ostatnie lata życia Jana Kazimierza*, oprac. A. Kersten; Warszawa 1972 s. 296-297.

⁴⁷ W. Kłaczewski, *Abdykacja Jana Kazimierza. Społeczeństwo szlacheckie wobec kryzysu politycznego lat 1667-1668*, Lublin 1993 s. 73.

Election

The course of the election, as a result of which Michael I [Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki] was quite unexpectedly elected king, was very stormy not only in the figurative sense but also in terms of the weather, which disrupted the order of the day. Other factors hampering the election included the endlessly prolonged anticipation and lack of a candidate with a clear advantage over the others. As a result, the atmosphere among the Polish nobility was growing tense. Also the common people demanded that a new king be elected, accusing the electors of betrayal: “Traitors! We’ll cut you down. We’ll not let you out of here; to no avail did you wreak havoc on the Commonwealth; constituemus other senators, we’ll elect a king from our own midst as the Lord God inspires our hearts”⁴⁸.

At first, the date of the election was set to 18 June 1669; however, as J. W. Poczobutt-Odlanicki reported, the aforementioned storm prevented the election of a king, which was postponed until the following day in hopes of better weather⁴⁹.

Michael I was elected king on 19 June 1669, one day before Corpus Christi. This time the weather was favourable. The election began with the hymn *Veni Sancte Spiritus* [Come Holy Spirit], intoned by Stefan Wierzbowski, a diocesan from Warsaw⁵⁰. Then the electors went their separate ways to proceed to vote in their respective provinces. At first the candidacy of Michael I was not taken into consideration at all. Neuburg had an advantage among the electors in the Wielkopolska provinces, while Lorrainer in the Małopolska [Lesser Poland] provinces⁵¹. Negotiations between the factions lasted for a long time; also political propaganda was used to discredit rivals among the nobility.

According to M. Chmielewska, at that time lampoons, caricatures and rumours were distributed to portray the candidates in a negative light⁵². Neuburg was ridiculed because of the abundance of his offspring that would suck out the Commonwealth like leeches, whereas

⁴⁸ J.Ch. Pasek, *Memoirs of the Polish baroque: the writings of Jan Chryzostom Pasek, a squire of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*; Berkeley 1976, s. 212.

⁴⁹ J. W. Poczobutt Odlanicki, *Pamiętnik*, ed. A. Rachuba, Warszawa 1987 s. 242.

⁵⁰ For more information, see: *The election of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki in 1669* [in] *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, Volume 1, ed. J.R. Mulryne, Hampshire 2004 p. 424-430.

⁵¹ J.Ch. Pasek, *Memoirs of the Polish baroque: the writings of Jan Chryzostom Pasek, a squire of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*; Berkeley : University of California Press 1976, s. 212.

⁵² M. Chmielewska, *Sejm elekcyjny Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego 1669 roku*, Warszawa 2006 s. 216.

Lorrainer was mocked because of his fear of the influence of the Jesuits and the Spanish Inquisition. According to D. Stone, “the nobles also feared Habsburg absolutism and involvement in wars against Turkey”⁵³. Great differences rose among the nobility, creating an atmosphere of upcoming bloodshed.

It is not exactly known when the candidacy of Michael I was put forward because it had already been proposed to elect a Piast as king. Among the potential candidates were Boguslaw Radziwill and Aleksander Polanowski, but their negative electorate was too extensive for them to count on any success in the election⁵⁴. Perhaps further negotiations would have come to a standstill had the castellan of Kalisz Kazimierz Radonicki not made a mistake – because of a slip of the tongue he proposed Michael I instead of Duke Aleksander Ostrogski. This mistake turned out to be fateful. The provinces hailed Michael I king as he was sitting among them and allegedly *with tears in his eyes tried to excuse himself from accepting the crown*⁵⁵.

In view of the common consent among the nobility, Primate Mikolaj Prazmowski was forced to commence the election procedures. Having asked three times the representatives of the provinces for consent to proclaim Michael I as king, and having received no dissenting voice, he hailed: *Vivat serenissimus Michael Rex Poloniae!*

From the perspective of the electors who were afraid of losing their privileges and wanted to fulfill the will of the noble masses, the candidacy of Michael I seemed to be perfect. It was a genuine response to the noble longing for the Piast dynasty, which had ended in 1370 along with the death of Casimir III the Great. The election of a Piast threw off the yoke of political maturity.

Epilogue

King Michael I was not only a Piast, which was a *sine qua non* for his election, but also a person of weak character and personality, both of which did not predispose him to assume royalty despite his gentility in the great Wisniowiecki family⁵⁶. According to D. Stone,

⁵³ D. Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795*, Volume 4, Seattle 2001, p. 233.

⁵⁴ J.Ch. Pasek, *Memoirs of the Polish baroque: the writings of Jan Chryzostom Pasek, a squire of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*; Berkeley 1976, s. 212.

⁵⁵ M. Chmielewska, *Sejm elekcyjny Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego 1669 roku*, Warszawa 2006 s. 217.

⁵⁶ D. Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795*, Volume 4, Seattle 2001, p. 233.

Wisniowiecki “learned to speak eight languages while studying at home as well in Prague, Dresden, and Vienna, but he acquired no interest in politics, philosophy, literature, or the arts”⁵⁷. His lack of qualities, which was characteristic of West European rulers, meant that the Polish nobility saw his reign as laying the ghost of absolutism that was already common in Western Europe and as maintaining the cracked political pillars of the Nobles’ Democracy.

To sum up, the election of Michael I was one of the last independent political initiatives of the Polish nobility, which was in harmony with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s reputation as – in Leibniz’s words – the best of possible worlds. However, the nobility’s theodicy was already doomed to failure. Almost a century later the rationalist Voltaire lampooned Leibniz’s arguments by creating in his philosophical novella *Candide* the character of Pangloss – a philosopher whose life was ruled by adversities and yet who held on steadfastly to his optimism.

Nevertheless, J. Griard states that Leibniz’s work was important for the history of philosophy, politics and law: “Though, historically, a complete waste of time, the *Specimen* is of interest because it offers a new approach to the rationality of political decisions. It gives an example of reason trying to estimate the best possible decision in a given situation”⁵⁸.

* * *

Leibniz’s *Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum* – legal logic at the service of politics: a study in the history of legal and political thought.

Summary: In 1668 King John II Casimir abdicated the Polish-Lithuanian throne and left for France. As a result of his decision, the Commonwealth was once again left without a monarch, thus another election was necessary. The favourites in the race for the Polish crown – still valuable though tarnished by John II Casimir’s poor policy – were four candidates, each of whom was keenly interested in the

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ J. Griard, *The Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligendo Rege Polonorum: From the Concatenation of Demonstrations to a Decision Appraisal Procedure* [in:] *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. M. Dascal, Tel Aviv 2008, p. 381.

royalty. The profile of the second candidate, Duke Philip William Wittelsbach of Neuburg who was married to one of Sigismund III Vasa's daughter, is connected with the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz titled *Specimen Demonstrationum Politicarum Pro Eligende Rege Polonorum* (An Essay on Political Demonstrations for the Election of the King of Poland). Yet it should be remembered that apart from serving the purpose of propaganda, Leibniz's work also included general thoughts regarding historical and political matters. The author had decided to go beyond the imposed guidelines referring to the campaign of a particular candidate and created a universal scientific work. A natural consequence of Leibniz's theory of legal argumentation is the need to create new discourses whose intellectual roots lie within the broad spectrum of mediaeval doctrines (Ramon Llul).

Key words: History of the Polish state and law, legal logic, Leibniz, history of legal and political thought.