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THE POLISH QUESTION AS A POLITICAL ISSUE  
WITHIN PHILOSOPHICAL DISPUTE:  
Leszczyński versus Rousseau

The term “Polish question” has been traditionally widely used for the explanation of great and serious impacts stemming from ongoing weakening of the inner political structure which later resulted in the ultimate failure of the Polish state. Actually, one should distinguish at least two dimensions of this question, which also represent two different approaches clarifying the so called Partitions of Poland as a result. One can be either concerned about the internal maladies of Polish political system or one can emphasize a complex international approach explaining the failure of the Polish state as a consequence of great powers’ diplomacy and fundamental changes of the European international system during the 18th century, as well. This explanatory dilemma has been present in the Polish environment since the act of Partitions because there have always been at least two sides: one seeing the loss of independency as a result of Polish mistakes and the other blaming the neighbouring states for greed and unfair behaviour.

It is necessary to mention this explanatory model of early modern Polish politics because it reveals important differences between the inner lasting conflicts raging around Polish self-perception on the one hand, and the homogenous stereotype that was ascribed to the Polish identity in Western European countries on the other hand. Contrary to the permanent and antagonistic interpretation of their political ideas by Poles themselves, there had been almost no theoretical interest in Polish political matters in Western political philosophy until the Partitions. Needless to say, this trend often persists even among contemporary thinkers because the Polish ancient system is frequently omitted from the types of early-modern constitutions. There are, for example, only rare occasions when the Polish ancient system is

mentioned as a fully-fledged exemplar of European Republican heritage next to the Netherlands, Italian city-states and English revolutionary movements.<sup>1</sup>

However, turning one's attention back to the age before the end of the Polish state, one should take into account that there have always been some exceptions among Western observers who were able to understand Polish development as a part of the European context and sometimes even assess it as a possible model for the rest of Europe. The most famous foreign observer who wrote about Polish constitution with passion and admiration was probably Jean Jacques Rousseau. His *Considerations on the Government in Poland* still attracts attention because it is not clear why he wrote about something he did not really understand well and which can be read as a refutation of all his previous work. However, one can set aside the quandary whether he simply changed his mind or tried to express the same ideas within a different context because it has been examined thoroughly many times with various results.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there is one not so frequent question which needs to be clarified to follow the aforementioned issue of Western European attitudes towards Polish matters. If the Polish political problems were usually completely overlooked there, it is necessary to ask why it was just Rousseau to depart from this trend and decided to become involved in them. The most direct explanation of Rousseau's motivation claims that his work was in fact ordered from Poland and that he had not been interested in this issue before that.<sup>3</sup> Although it explains only the question of initiation and not motivation, it is traditionally supposed that Rousseau heard thoroughly about Polish matters for the first time from the members of the Bar Confederation who tried to persuade him about the necessity of reforms. This conviction can be supported by Rousseau himself who was very grateful to Polish Count Michał Wielhorski claiming that he knew "no one

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<sup>1</sup> Republican grounds of Polish early-modern regime have been fully analysed in the collective monograph edited by Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen. On the contrary, another classic of the research of republicanism, J. G. A. Pocock mentions Polish unique principles just occasionally, see van Gelderen, M. – Skinner, Q. (eds.), *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*. Vol. I, II., Cambridge 2002; Pocock, J. G. A., *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton 1975.

<sup>2</sup> The main possible interpretations are explained by Willmoore Kendall in his introduction to the English translation of Rousseau's *Considerations*, Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, Indianapolis 1985, ix–xxxix.

<sup>3</sup> The list of recommendations was ordered by the Polish Count Michał Wielhorski who acted as an envoy of the Bar Confederation in Paris. This indicates that the Polish nobles, who revolted against royal reform group and cooperation with Russians, tried to find some philosophical and theoretical support for saving their independent state.

better qualified to elaborate such a plan for reforming the government of Poland than Count Wielhorski”<sup>4</sup> and later admitted that he “devoted six months ... first to studying the constitution of an unhappy nation”<sup>5</sup>

However, the acknowledged assumption that Rousseau’s answer to Wielhorski’s request was his first touch with Polish environment ignores Rousseau’s earlier confrontation with Count Stanisław Leszczyński<sup>6</sup> who was still a nominal Polish-Lithuanian king at the time of their polemic in 1751. This contest that started as a Leszczyński’s response to Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Arts and Science* and later went on with Rousseau’s final answer, was focused on the various questions of human nature and dealt mainly with the purpose of knowledge. The prevailing philosophical spirit of the whole debate is probably the main reason why the Leszczyński’s comments have always been published as a part of other contributions to Rousseau’s *Discourse* and not as an example of unique contact of Jean-Jacques with the Polish way of Enlightenment thought.<sup>7</sup> This means that there have been two distinct approaches to Rousseau’s “Polish matters” so far: either one was concerned with Rousseau’s *Considerations* as a part of his doctrine or one tried to explain the philosophical nuances between Leszczyński’s criticism and response of Rousseau.

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<sup>4</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Oeuvres complètes de J. J. Rousseau*, vol. IV, Paris 1835, 82; see Kendall’s introduction to the English translation of Rousseau’s *Considerations*: Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, ix.

<sup>6</sup> Stanisław Leszczyński was a member of one of the wealthiest and most powerful Lithuanian noble families who was enthroned as the Polish king by Charles XII of Sweden in 1705, although he was nominally elected. However, his political career was full of turning points as he lost his throne due to the intervention of Russians who supported Augustus II the Strong from Saxony. Leszczyński managed to gain his throne back in 1733, but finally abdicated in 1736 and was compensated by receiving a title of Duke of Lorraine. There he wrote his most famous political work *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający* about the best way how to reform the Polish system. He was also successful in family diplomacy as his daughter married Louis XV of France and thus became a queen of France, See for example Cieślak, E., *Stanisław Leszczyński*, Wrocław 1994; Topolski, J., Stanisław Leszczyński – ideologia polityczna i działanie, in: *Stanisław Leszczyński, król, polityk, pisarz, mecenas. Materiały z europejskiej konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej w 300-lecie urodzin króla Stanisława Leszczyńskiego*. Ed. A. Konio, Leszno 2001.

<sup>7</sup> This is the case of publications about Rousseau, when his reaction to Leszczyński was published in a collection of his other writings, which means that Leszczyński is considered just as one of many critics in this context. On the contrary, in the Polish environment, Leszczyński is read as one of the most influential and important adherents of the Enlightenment – his response to Rousseau was for example subsumed as a part of the anthology about the Polish thought in the 18th century. See Gourevitch, V. (ed.), *Rousseau. “The Discourses” and Other Early Political Writings. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, Cambridge 1997; Skrzypek, M., *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1700–1830*, Tom I. Okres saski 1700–1763, Warszawa 2000.

Therefore, it is apparent that some overarching view is still missing and to find it requires taking Leszczyński's later writing into account. If one looks at works of Rousseau and Leszczyński thoroughly, one has to notice that there were more similar issues than just a question of human knowledge that both thinkers tried to solve, although this was the only issue they confronted directly against each other. One should not forget that Leszczyński's probably most famous piece *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający* was written as a sum of proposals concerning necessary reforms that should save the Polish state before its breakdown. That is why, one can see the contest between Leszczyński and Rousseau as a more complex issue which could be divided into two debates. The first debate, which dealt with the question of arts and science, really took place between both philosophers, whilst the second was just nominal, because each of them wrote his work on his own, irrespective of the opponent's attitudes. Nevertheless, they both wrote about the same problem with the same mission as they tried to formulate the ideal principles of political order and used the example of Poland to demonstrate them. Thus, it is fully legitimate and desirable to analyse their concepts by double comparative approach which will reveal if it is possible to identify some antagonistic aspects in their political thought resulting from their different understanding of human nature and knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this comparison should also clarify to what extent there is a real dichotomy between the both political theories, which can be classified as a tension within the thought of the Enlightenment.

### First Debate on Human Nature: Leszczyński as an Opponent of Discourses

If one wants to respect the chronological order of both questions, it is necessary to start with Leszczyński's objections to *Discourses* that provoked Rousseau to response. Their mutual exchange of views on human knowledge was taken quite quickly at

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<sup>8</sup> That is why, one should not be criticized for creating mythologies according to famous thesis of Quentin Skinner as this is not the case of artificial association of unrelated theories. Both thinkers knew each other and even exchanged their views on the same question, which means that it is fully proper to compare their concepts regarding the similar problems, although they did not understand it as a real continuation of their previous clash. On the theory of mythologies see Skinner, Q., Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas. *History and Theory* 8 (1969), No. 1, 3–53.

that time<sup>9</sup> and can be considered as their only explicit confrontation which is very decisive for the comparison of their later views. The very first remarkable thing which one should take as an important distinction between both sides is a different style of writing that can be recognized especially from phrases used by both authors to address the opponent. Although Leszczyński respects the neutral marking of Rousseau for many times when he writes about him as a “citizen of Geneva”, there are some places in his work where he denies not only theses and arguments of Rousseau, but also his personal qualities. Thus, for example, he wonders how the Dijon academy could have rewarded him for his piece of work;<sup>10</sup> writes about him as about “a nameless laureate”<sup>11</sup> and later even offends him by claiming that he “speaks as a speechifier and not a philosopher”,<sup>12</sup> because it is obvious that “he does not believe in everything that he tried to persuade us about”.<sup>13</sup> Even when Leszczyński tries to persuade Rousseau that he wants to help him by reconciliation of sciences and virtue,<sup>14</sup> there is no doubt that his rhetoric is mainly aggressive, ironic and its main aim is to deny the Rousseau’s conclusions at all.

Contrary to Leszczyński’s original intention, which can be read as a creation of strong dichotomy without any space for compromise, Rousseau answers to his comments in much more gentle way. The first difference consists in absence of any pejorative expressions because Rousseau addresses his answer to the Anonymous Writer or simply Writer and does not use any phrase resembling the satirical tone of his opponent. Although Rousseau’s way of addressing could have been influenced

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<sup>9</sup> The Answer of Leszczyński was published in a journal *Mercure de France* in September 1751 as “Réponse au discours de Mr Rousseau, qui a remporté le prix de Académie de Dijon, sur cette question: si le rétablissement des sciences et des arts a contribué à épurer les mœurs”, while *Discourses* by Rousseau won the prize in July 1750 and were published in the autumn that year. The final reaction of Rousseau was then issued not later than in November 1751. See Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, I., *Leszczyński contra Rousseau. Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 23/1, 1978, 55, 61.

<sup>10</sup> “Rozprawa obywatela genewskiego budzi niejaki zdziwienie, jak niemniej może je wzbudzić fakt, że sławna Akademia ją nagrodziła”. Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego na rozprawę Jana Jakuba Rousseau nagrodzoną przez Akademię w Dijon*, in: Skrzypek, M., *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1700–1830*, 635.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 635.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 642.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 636.

<sup>14</sup> “Autor znajdzie we mnie przeciwnika bezstronnego. Atakując go, chciałbym mu się nawet przysłużyć; wszystkie moje wysiłki w tej walce do tego jedynie zmierzają, by umysł jego pogodzić z sercem i móc się uradować widokiem zgodnie w jego duszy złączonych nauk, które ja tak podziwiam, i cnót, które on umiłował.” *Ibidem*, 636.

by the fact that Leszczyński had published his comment anonymously, one should not ignore the fact that Rousseau maintained his manners even after he had recognized his philosophical adversary and acknowledged him as the Polish king and duke of Lorraine.<sup>15</sup> His levity is admirable even more if one takes into account his suspicion that one part of Leszczyński's work had not been written by him, but by a Jesuit priest Joseph de Menoux.<sup>16</sup> Even in this case Rousseau was able to distinguish between the gentle reaction to the Polish king and severe comments towards the priest: "I knew a Jesuit, Father de Menou, had been concerned in it... and falling without mercy upon all the jesuitical phrases, I remarked, as I went along, an anachronism which I thought could come from nobody but the priest."<sup>17</sup>

However, much more important than the style of addressing is surely Rousseau's conciliatory approach to most of objections that were raised by his critic. If Leszczyński tries to refute all Rousseau's fundamental principles because of his misled considerations, Rousseau is very convincing in accepting his opponent as someone who has been qualified enough to advise him. He supports this view by many statements such as "I owe thanks rather than a reply to the Anonymous Writer who has just honoured my Discourse with an Answer", which he later highlights as the discourse that "is full of very true and very well-proved things".<sup>18</sup> Rousseau appreciated the work of Leszczyński even after many years in his *Confessions*, where he emphasized his respect to the author again,<sup>19</sup> however, none of these flattering comments should mislead us since if one focuses not on formal but on substantial things, one must notice that in the end, Rousseau denied the

<sup>15</sup> The original title of Rousseau's response was called „Réponse de Jean-Jacques Rousseau au roi de Pologne, duc de Lorraine, sur la Réfutation faite par ce prince de son Discours“. The fact that Rousseau had initially wanted to respect anonymity of his opponent and decided to state his identity not before his own confession is supported by the statement of I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa: "Wobec tego, że rzecz króla polskiego była najpierw bezimienna i że autor jeszcze jej wówczas nie był uznał za swoją, byłem obowiązany pozostawić jego incognito; lecz monarcha ten, później się do niej publicznie przyznał, zwolnił mnie od dalszego przemilczania wyświadczonego mi zaszczytu". Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, I., *Leszczyński contra Rousseau*, 61.

<sup>16</sup> For the details of this suspicion see *ibidem*, 60–62.

<sup>17</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Confessions*, London 1903, 232.

<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, J. J., Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva. On the Answer made to his Discourse, in: Ed. V. Gourevitch, *Rousseau. "The Discourses" and Other Early Political Writings*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> "The second was King Stanislaus, himself, who did not disdain to enter the lists with me. The honour he did me, obliged me to change my manner in combating his opinions". Rousseau, J. J., *Confessions*, 232.

main sense of Leszczyński's work, so as Leszczyński had done before with *Discourses*.<sup>20</sup> Thus, one can conclude that Rousseau accepted the challenge and their mutual antagonism of enlightened thought had been established.

This dichotomy had been certainly established by Leszczyński because he was the one who selected arbitrary parts from *Discourses* and "demarcated the area" which Rousseau could later use as the arguments for his apology. That is why, it is not so crucial what Rousseau had truly in mind when he was writing his *Discourses*; and it is more important to ask in which way his ideas were interpreted by Leszczyński and then clarified by Rousseau again. Their debate can be therefore divided into a few parts representing distinct issues that Leszczyński had highlighted as the main mistakes and that Rousseau later tried to defend.

The most serious argument raised by Leszczyński against *Discourses* is probably his rejection of interdependency between the rise of sciences and fine arts on the one hand, and the existence of abundance and idleness in human society on the other hand. According to him, Rousseau is wrong if he claims that one should understand both these activities as a consequence of leisure and comfort since this would mean that only those who have nothing to do can be occupied either with science or arts, which is obviously nonsense. Leszczyński denies this misled causality between wealthy and knowledge using an example of philosophers who usually were not rich, but very poor, which means that they have always been able to deal with science not because of luxury but with the lack of it: "For every Plato who is wealthy, for every Aristippus who is respected at Court, how many Philosophers are reduced to beggary, wrapped in their own virtue and ignored in their solitude?"<sup>21</sup> Moreover, similar historical examples are used by Leszczyński to deepen his criticism as he rejects not only the aforementioned causality, but mainly Rousseau's conclusion that sciences are dangerous as they arise from laziness and further support it, which leads people to the decay of morality and social effeminacy.<sup>22</sup> Also in this case he contradicts Rousseau's judgment about artists and scientists who have been labelled as the main culprits of moral decay as he reminds us that in all ancient states such as Egypt, Greece, Rome or China which were highlighted by Rousseau

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<sup>20</sup> "I made use of a graver style, but not less nervous; and without failing in respect to the author, I completely refuted his work." Rousseau, J. J., *Confessions*, 232. This opinion about Leszczyński's conclusions held Rousseau even after many years, although at the same time, he admitted in his *Confessions* that the composition of his *Discourses* "full of force and fire, absolutely wants logic and order; of all the works I ever wrote, this is the weakest in reasoning, and the most devoid of number and harmony". Rousseau, J. J., *Confessions*, 224.

<sup>21</sup> Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego*, 641.

<sup>22</sup> Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, I., *Leszczyński contra Rousseau*, 59.

himself, philosophers and legislators did not spoil the manners, but maintained and in some cases even established them.<sup>23</sup>

All these arguments are directed to prove the fundamental true; that people are reasonable creatures who can be distinguished from other animals just by their reason. This enables them to recognize what is right or wrong, to face perceptual tricks of their senses, to use fruits of nature and thus finally justifies one's use of science as a suitable tool to understand the world. Although Leszczyński admits that science can spoil individuals in some cases, it is negligible as compared to its advantages and profit. Even if Rousseau was right and scientific progress would cause a moral decay, it would be easy to advocate it by quantifying all the benefits which has generated so far, because the more a society supports science, the better life can be led there.<sup>24</sup>

Now it is a good time to let Rousseau speak for the first time, as it is intriguing to analyse how he can deny all the mentioned objections without losing his levity, sense for compromise and respect to his opponent. Primarily, he strictly denies Leszczyński's statement that he promoted a causal connection between science and abundance because the only thing he wanted to prove regarding artificiality and depravity of those societies which are based on a scientific obsession as a consequence of inequality: "Nor had I said that luxury was born of the Sciences, I had said, rather, that both were born together and that one hardly ever goes without the other... the first source of evil is inequality, from inequality arose riches ... from riches are born luxury and idleness, from luxury arose the fine Arts and from idleness the Sciences."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, his argumentation is not about whether one or another scientist is rich or poor, but it reveals that for maintaining a class of scientists, there are some inequalities necessary, which means that those who deal with knowledge become dependent on the rich: "This is precisely why the evil is even greater – the rich and the learned only corrupt one another."<sup>26</sup>

This quotation is really important, because Rousseau repeats there one of his few political arguments from *Discourses* and tries to advocate his relationship to science by highlighting its connection with a principle of unjust society. When he claims in *Discourses* that "the arts, literature and the sciences, less despotic though

<sup>23</sup> Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego*, 640.

<sup>24</sup> "Któż jednak zdoła wyliczyć nieprzebrane ich dobrodziejstwa i to wszystko, co za ich sprawą przyjemnia i upiększa nam życie? Im bardziej się je w jakimś państwie uprawia, w tym świetniejszym jest ono rozkwicie; bez nich wszystko by marniało i więdło." Ibidem, 637.

<sup>25</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva*, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 45.

perhaps more powerful, fling garlands of flowers over the chains which weigh them down” and that “necessity raised up thrones; the arts and sciences have made them strong”,<sup>27</sup> Leszczyński is completely deaf to his complaints. One can say that political context as one of the most fundamental levels of Rousseau’s argumentation in *Discourses* was fully ignored by the Polish critique, and Rousseau tried to emphasize it again, because he wanted to explain that his thoughts had been misrepresented. Rousseau’s statement that scientists and artists are merely servants of ruling class and they are not rich, since if they were, they would not serve their masters so willingly, is very challenging and controversial. The question is why Leszczyński felt no need to comment on it. Naturally, he should have reacted *a fortiori* because he could have understood it as a frontal attack against his social status – as the Polish king and Duke of Lorraine he was the pure agent of those in power. However, he did not respond to it at all, which could be read as a strong effort to maintain the whole debate in a strict philosophical direction without any political connotations even against original intentions of Rousseau. That is why, it is all the more important not to study just their exchange of views, but to compare their political concepts regarding Polish system as well, which could clarify to what extent they were opponents or allies.

Whether one accepts this hypothesis about Leszczyński’s hard-headed ignorance or not, it is, nevertheless, obvious that it was almost impossible to oppose Rousseau without taking political opinions into account. This is apparent, for example, when Rousseau responds to Leszczyński’s argument that society is able to benefit from science under all circumstances. At one point they seem to be in agreement on this issue: “In this sense I praised knowledge, and this is the sense in which my Adversary praises it ... we are thus perfectly agreed on this point,”<sup>28</sup> since Rousseau emphasizes that he shares the same view regarding the good essence of science: “Science in itself is very good, that is obvious, and one would have to have taken leave of good sense to maintain the contrary.”<sup>29</sup> But as his argumentation goes on, it becomes clear that their attitudes differ greatly, especially in political matters, because Rousseau is convinced that society is not so well organized to be able to prevent itself from harm: “Science, however beautiful, however sublime, is not made for man, that his mind is too limited to make much progress in it, and his heart too full of passions to

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<sup>27</sup> Rousseau, J. J., Discourse, in: Ed. V. Gourevitch, *Rousseau. “The Discourses” and Other Early Political Writings*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva*, 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, 33.

keep him from putting it to bad use.”<sup>30</sup> So if Leszczyński reproaches Rousseau for not admitting that virtue and science can exist in mutual harmony, he misses the point, because the question is not whether someone is able to be both virtuous and learned, but that too much knowledge means danger for a society as a whole. A very important difference between individual and collective understanding of human behaviour appears in here. Rousseau is actually willing to admit there have always been some great men combining science with virtue, such as Bacon, Newton or Descartes,<sup>31</sup> but he does not put any emphasis on it for he sees them as exceptions which cannot influence a general moral decay: “The cultivation of the Sciences corrupts a nation’s morals, this is what I dared to maintain ... one can therefore not conclude from my principles that a man cannot be both learned and virtuous.”<sup>32</sup>

In that spirit Rousseau also refutes a sophism used by Leszczyński to confute him from paradox: how was Jean-Jacques able to write his essay by a gentle and intelligent language and at the same time criticize education for spoiling virtues?<sup>33</sup> The answer is simple, even if Rousseau does not use it explicitly, if virtue and knowledge can coexist in an individual, one can suppose that Rousseau is an example of their harmony. However, this rather mordacious comment from Leszczyński reveals another important distinction which consists in assumptions concerning human equality of abilities. It might be surprising that when Rousseau criticizes Leszczyński for his conviction about the equal capacity of all humans to use their reason properly, he actually advocates a very elitist approach with regard to his other works. Thus it seems that Leszczyński is far more democratic on this issue as he believes that knowledge should be spread without restraint, whereas Rousseau reserves the right of using science and education just for the chosen ones: “I leave it not to the Public, but to the small number of true Philosophers, to decide which of these two conclusions ought to be preferred ... only in a very few men of genius does insight into their own ignorance grow as they learn ... almost as soon as small minds have learned something, they believe they know everything.”<sup>34</sup>

The dispute over utility and capacities of human reason should be seen as a part of wider argument between both thinkers, which Leszczyński initiated by questioning the Rousseau’s concept of a natural state. He emphasizes that diversity between people is caused mainly by the differences in “climate, temper...political constitutions,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, I., *Leszczyński contra Rousseau*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego*, 636.

<sup>34</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva*, 34, 38.

habits, rights and from all other reasons, but not by science”<sup>35</sup> and tries to denunciate Rousseau’s visions of innocent and good primitive savage as a nonsense and myth: “To remind constantly the original simplicity... and present it as a proof of social innocence... is nothing more than to draw just an ideal portrait that one can delude oneself with.”<sup>36</sup> It means that according to Leszczyński, evil and badness are inherent to human nature without any social influence, and that a man is able to commit a crime even when he does not know he is just doing it: “Where and when has anybody seen people without vices, lust and passions... if there were some times, if there are any places on Earth, where nobody knows what the crime is, other evils must be spread there... that they have no greed for gold or no ambitions, it does not mean they do not know pride and injustice.”<sup>37</sup>

However, if people can be vicious just by nature, there must be some tool which enables them to improve themselves and to live in keeping with moral rules. That is why, Leszczyński is ready to use a strong argument as an explanation by reversing Rousseau logic upside down – if people were angels by nature, they would not need to get better and any progress would be useless; but because they can be evil they must use reasoning for getting along. The desire for knowledge and curiosity are therefore necessary parts of human nature, because “the more one knows, the more one feels that he must find out even more”<sup>38</sup> and “the more easily he can make aesthetical, moral and customary judgments”.<sup>39</sup> Without reasoning one loses his humanity and can be mistaken for a simple animal.<sup>40</sup> This is particularly evident when Leszczyński closes his considerations about the relationship between vice and virtue by Heraclitian exclamation that one must overcome evil to do well.

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<sup>35</sup> Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego*, 639.

<sup>36</sup> “Przypominać bezustannie tę pierwotną prostotę, którą się tak bez miary wychwala, przedstawiać ją zawsze jako nieodłączną towarzyszkę niewinności, cóż to jest innego niż kreślić portret czysto myślowy, by móc się nim ludzić?” Ibidem, 639.

<sup>37</sup> “Gdzie i kiedy widział kto ludzi bez wad, bez pożądań, bez namiętności? Czy zadatków na wszystkie występki nie nosimy w nas samych? Jeśli były czasy, jeśli dziś jeszcze istnieją kraje na ziemi, które pewnych zbrodni nie znają, czyż nie szerzą się tam inne zdrożności? A jeszcze potworniejsze u owych ludów, które tak się chwali za ich tępotę? Że chciwości ich złoto nie kuszi, że ambicji ich nie nęca zaszczyty, czy wystarcza to, by im były nie znane pycha i niesprawiedliwość?” Ibidem, 639.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 638.

<sup>39</sup> Golka, M., Stanisław Leszczyński jako polemista Jana Jakuba Rousseau, *Dialogi o kulturze i edukacji*, Nr. 1, (1) 2012, 66.

<sup>40</sup> “Bez oświecającego nas i naszymi krokami kierującego rozumu, zmieszani ze zwierzętami, podlegli władzy instynktu, czyż nie stalibyśmy się wkrótce równie do nich podobni z postępowania, jak jesteśmy już z potrzeb?” Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego*, 637.

Actually, this good can be revealed just by science; botanist can recognize a poisonous plant by research<sup>41</sup> and only an educated man can distinguish duty and virtue from crime. The ignorance cannot be virtuous, because only the one who has to choose between good and evil and knowingly struggles for the first is a truly moral person.

All these conclusions are, nevertheless, strongly questioned by Rousseau, who, at first denies the aforementioned visions of human nature by highlighting his basic principles of a natural state and later criticizes the idea of virtue as a result of experience with evil: "It is not certain that in order to learn to do well, one has to know how many ways there are of doing evil... we have a guide within... which never forsakes us when we are in need... it would suffice us to guide us in innocence."<sup>42</sup> If statements of his opponents were right, it would mean that only those who are able to use their reason properly and intellectually could live a virtuous life: "Is this that all men are ordered to be Philosophers or that only Philosophers are ordered to believe in God?"<sup>43</sup> Rousseau strictly refutes that for perceiving the greatness and goodness of God for example, the study of Physics should be necessary,<sup>44</sup> because one is able to reveal His presence everywhere in nature just by one's intuition. Rousseau mentions an appropriate allegory of the Philosopher and the Plowman in this respect, for whereas a philosopher is convinced that he has already revealed the eternal wisdom and thus he dares to criticize and create his own laws of nature, a plowman is just happy that the sun and rain fertilize his lands without necessity of asking why does it happen.<sup>45</sup> It illustrates how the reason can mistake people, because when a philosopher loses his time by useless questioning the natural order and by arrogance of his own self-importance, a plowman is ready for a proper work which is useful for his natural humanity.

This way of consideration is later emphasized again, when Rousseau writes about the decay of Christianity due to those Christians who started to think about

<sup>41</sup> "Doświadczony botanik umie rozpoznać, które ziele trujące, które lecznicze, gdy tymczasem ogół, nie znając ani mocy zbawiennej jednych, ani jadowitości drugich, depce po nich nie rozróżniając albo bez wyboru je zrywa." Ibidem, 638.

<sup>42</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 37.

<sup>45</sup> "The Philosopher, flattering himself that he fathorns God's secrets, dares to liken his supposed wisdom to eternal wisdom, he approves, he blames, he corrects, he prescribes laws to nature and limits to the Divinity, and while he is busy with his vain systems, and takes endless pains to arrange the machine of the world, the Plowman, who sees the rain and the sun by turns fertilize his field, admires, praises and blesses the hand from which he receives these graces, without troubling himself about how they come to him." Ibidem, 37.

it instead of just believing<sup>46</sup> or when he denies the statement of Leszczyński that people should behave along gentle manners and mask their vices to integrate the weaker ones and to improve a society.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, Rousseau holds the view that a man must have a right to refuse hypocrisy and to live according to his original qualities as what is artificial, cannot be virtuous: “No, to cover one’s wickedness with the dangerous mantle of hypocrisy is not to honour virtue, it is to offend it by profaning its standards.”<sup>48</sup>

To sum it up, we can claim that the question whether an original human nature should be maintained or whether one should improve oneself by the directives of reason is an essential dilemma between Leszczyński and Rousseau because these two antagonist assumptions result in discrepancies in other related issues.

## The Polish Question as the “Second Debate”: How to Save Poland?

However, if one wants to qualify the differences between both approaches as a strict dichotomy within the Enlightenment thought, one must take also other levels of human life into account. As we have already highlighted, the “first debate” between Leszczyński and Rousseau was led primarily on the philosophical matters, which means that the Polish king attacked his opponent with a strong effort not to conclude any important outcomes concerning political issues. However, the relationship between philosophical and political questions is really crucial in this case, as the fact that one philosopher espouses some ontological assumptions about being and meaning of life does not determine his political beliefs automatically, which is emphasized, for example, by Charles Taylor in his famous distinction between

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<sup>46</sup> “Soon they ceased to be satisfied with the simplicity of the Gospel and the faith of the Apostles, they constantly wanted to prove themselves cleverer than their predecessors... everyone wants to teach how to act well, and no one wants to learn it, we have all become Doctors, and have ceased to be Christians.” *Ibidem*, 42, 44.

<sup>47</sup> “Czy nie przynosi to społeczeństwu mimo wszystko pewnej korzyści, że człowiek występny nie śmie mu się pokazywać takim, jakim jest rzeczywiście, i musi, że tak powiem, stroić się w barwy skromności i obyczajności? Powiedziano kiedyś, i to jest prawda: jakkolwiek odrażająca sama w sobie, jest jednak obłuda hołdem, który występki składa cnotcie; chroni ona przynajmniej dusze słabe od zarażenia się złym przykładem.” Leszczyński, S., *Odpowiedź króla polskiego*, 641.

<sup>48</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva*, 47.

ontological and advocacy issues.<sup>49</sup> That is why, further analysis concerning political observations of both authors is required.

Of course, one can doubt whether it is proper to compare political beliefs of Leszczyński and Rousseau, if they did not confront each other directly about these matters. But there is a strong argument to advocate this comparison because, as we have already mentioned, both thinkers devoted a single book to the Polish question. Moreover, one must stress that both these works are similar at least in two specifics: the structure of their works on the one hand, and universal conclusions exceeding the Polish experience on the other hand. As for the structure, it means they both resulted from the same assumptions that there was something wrong with Polish society which should have been improved by reforming the political system. Regarding a similarity of general conclusions, one can notice that both Rousseau and Leszczyński did not write their works just as instructions with limited scope, but they tried to express their understanding of political matters with universal connotations. That is why, one should not hesitate to interpret and compare them because it enables more thorough analysis of their philosophical dichotomy that was established before.

Both political considerations on Polish matters deal with three essential tasks: 1) to diagnose Polish maladies, i.e. the most malignant principles of political system, which explain the causes of decline of Polish society; 2) to define which features are so unique and worthy enough that they must be maintained for preserving Polish identity; 3) to propose a list of fundamental reforms which are necessary to save the independent Polish state. Thus every analysis aspiring to compare Rousseau's *Considerations* with Leszczyński's *Głos* properly should take all these levels into account and thus answer these questions: Is there a strong interdependency between the promoted understanding of human nature and ideal political concepts according to Rousseau and Leszczyński? Is one allowed to see their treatments of Polish question as strict contradictions and thus to extend the dichotomy of their philosophical ideas to political sphere?

When one speaks about dichotomy, it is interesting to notice that Leszczyński wrote his list of hints in the very similar spirit as he had responded to Rousseau's *Discourses*. He starts his opening chapter with the statement that there have always been two sides in Polish society which can be named as progressivists and reactionaries. He also distinguishes these parties when he dedicates his work to those who love their country and are willing to devote something to its remedy. At

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<sup>49</sup> Taylor, C., *Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate*, in: Taylor, C., *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1995, 181.

the same time, he expects that his work will be defamed by those who want to prevent their fatherland from any changes and see the Polish future in a disorder.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, it is obvious that he strongly criticizes conservative attitudes in the Polish context, as he blames their proponents for stubbornness and cowardice. To do so, Leszczyński uses three allegories which are interesting not only because they reveal clarity of his approach very plainly, but because they can be read as a continuation of his beliefs expressed in the response to *Discourses* of Rousseau. Firstly, he compares traditionalist Poles to those who are seriously ill and deny cure because they hate the desirable drugs and rely just on fate and nature; then he continues with an example of heretics who “want to die with the same faith they were born with”<sup>51</sup> even when they have found out that they have been mistaken; and finally he flouts a landowner who does not want to repair his eroding house because he “wants to live as his father and grandfather did without any changes.”<sup>52</sup> It is not difficult to notice that two of these examples actually just evolve the arguments of both sides from Leszczyński’s debate with Rousseau. When the Polish king uses the allegory of a dying man, he undermines Rousseau’s opinion that society can do well in accord with nature and without scientific knowledge. And secondly, when he mentions the case of stubborn heretic, he actually states the argument against his former opponent again because Rousseau claimed that Christianity is not something which should be taken into question or even changed.

However, there is another allegory proving that Leszczyński applied his former arguments from his response to Rousseau to political matters concerning Poland. In this regard, he highlights two professions whose skills are necessary for saving the Polish political system and independency: knowledge of a carver and art of a painter. The former must know how to cut off wood not to destroy it but to create something better, the latter must sense how to apply colours to paint a perfect masterpiece.<sup>53</sup> That is why one can say that reformers of Poland need two essential tools to establish a perfect constitution according to Leszczyński: professional knowledge and arts.

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<sup>50</sup> “... bez żadnej pasyi i interesu prywatnego tąż miłością ojczyzny tknięty roztrząsać będzie tę pracę moje ... nie ujdę nagany od tych, którzy ją radzi widzą w nierządzie albo którzy rozumieją, że inaczej leczyć nie można jej dolegliwości, tylko w zamieszaniu.” Leszczyński, S., *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający przez Stanisława Leszczyńskiego, króla polskiego, wielkiego księcia litewskiego I księcia Lotaryngii I Baru*, Kraków 1858, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, 6.

<sup>53</sup> “...snycerz nie dokazałby swojej sztuki, gdyby nie odcinał co zbytniego, malarz zaś niepotrafiłby swego kunsztu doskonale, tylko przydając co należy do doskonałości.” Ibidem, 7.

If we turn our attention to Rousseau's determination of Polish problems and defects, we can notice that he starts his *Considerations* very similarly to Leszczyński as he wonders "how a state so strangely constituted has been able to survive so long".<sup>54</sup> Thus his observations seem to argue against conservative approaches as well, which is obvious when he qualifies Poland and its legislation as "a large body made up of a large number of dead members, and of a small number of disunited members whose movements ... are so far from being directed to a common end"<sup>55</sup> and which could be read as a criticism of taking dead traditions into account. That is why, it is quite surprising that Rousseau is ready to make a virtue of necessity a few lines below, when he admires the Polish resistance: "While Poland, a depopulated, devastated and oppressed region, defenceless against her aggressors and at the height of her misfortunes and anarchy, still shows all the fire of youth."<sup>56</sup> It means, Rousseau in fact does not denounce Poles for their living in a strange political system, but quite the contrary, he is convinced they should be praised for it as they have always been able to survive in a distinct order even when they have had to face all the mentioned enemies and problems.

Later he expresses his relationship to the difference of Poles quite openly when he warns them before any serious changes: "Think twice, brave Poles! Never forget, as you dream of what you wish to gain what you might lose."<sup>57</sup> This ultraconservative attitude could be astonishing of Rousseau, however, it becomes clearer when he explains his concept of national distinctiveness as an essence of human virtue. In this regard, he strongly criticizes all the modern European nations, because "they all have the same tastes, passions and customs"<sup>58</sup> and there are no differences among them. Hence Rousseau states that all European nations blather on about how unselfish they are and how they think about the public good, but in fact, they all think only of themselves. This lack of virtue in their national identities is a reason why Rousseau refuses to consider them nations, because "their fatherland is any country where there is money to steal and women for them to seduce".<sup>59</sup>

The only exception which Rousseau states and extols is naturally Polish nation and thus, one can finally understand the logic of his argumentation: if all the western nations are civilised and thus artificial and spoiled, the Polish nation must

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<sup>54</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 11.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, 12.

be kept as it has always been, because it is the only one which can preserve virtue of natural humanity. The first important difference between Leszczyński and Rousseau in this respect can be therefore summed up as follows: where the former sees the causes of decay in traditionalism or unwillingness to change anything and to accept modern Western patterns of behaviour,<sup>60</sup> the latter denies to see nature of Poles as a cause of decay at all and warns them not to change their habits on the model of Western Europeans.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, their antagonism is later evolved when both thinkers try to describe some fundamental features of Polish national character. Although they seem to be in agreement on this issue at first sight, one must realize that they result from different assumptions. Hence, when Leszczyński states that “if the Commonwealth resigned to be what it had been, we would not be the same anymore”<sup>62</sup> and Rousseau exclaims to Poles “not to think poorly of their constitution”, because “it has made you what you are”<sup>63</sup>, they do not have the same in mind. If one looks at both quotations carefully, one should conclude there is a reverse logical order. Leszczyński is convinced that Poles are “pious, reasonable, brave and magnificent by nature”<sup>64</sup> and for preserving these qualities they must keep their republic strong, which is unthinkable if they do not reform the most serious defects. On the contrary, Rousseau argues that Poles are so perfect just because of excellence of their political system, which means that there is a different order of causality in his case. According to Leszczyński, Polish system could be great due to Poles who are like that, whereas

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<sup>60</sup> He recommends this solution especially in warfare, which was really outdated according to him: “Mówimy, że szable nasze rozprzestrzeniały granice, prawda, ale wtenczas, kiedy insze narody tąż bronią i temi sposobami, co i my, wojowały... „zostawmy ten sposób wojowania Tatarom, Wołochom, Kozakom... naśladowmy godniejsze w przykładach narody... dla czego nasze zwyczaje nam się zdadzą dobre? Bośmy tak w nich utopieni, że się o insze i nie pitamy.... Dość że te zwyczaje są cudzoziemskie, żeby się nam zdały cudowne.” Leszczyński, S., *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający*, 11, 13.

<sup>61</sup> That is why, Poles have to wear distinctively Polish clothing and not the French fashion, why they have to play their own national public games like bullfights in Spain, and why they should prohibit all foreign celebrations, comedies, operas and instead create their own Polish ones. Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> „Jeżeli rzplta przestanie być tem, czem jest, i my przestać będziemy musieli być tem, czem jesteśmy.” Leszczyński, S., *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> “Naród nasz, bez pochlebstw sądząc, ma wszystkie z przyrodzenia przymioty... pobożność, rozum, odwaga, wspaniałość, wszystkie te cnoty są naturalne...” Leszczyński, S., *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający*, 15.

in Rousseau's view Poles could be great because they live under such a proper constitution. So, which came first, "the chicken or the egg?"

Actually, this could be read as a play on words of both philosophers, if it did not have serious impacts on coherence of their preceding way of thinking. Perhaps, it is necessary to remind that they both advocated different positions in their "first debate". There Leszczyński described human nature as quite imperfect that must be improved by the emancipation of reason and knowledge and Rousseau denies it by claiming that people are best just as they are by nature without any social interventions. How is it, therefore, possible that now they have shifted their positions when Leszczyński promotes the natural influence and Rousseau the social one?

The possible answer to this confusion consists maybe in the different concepts of natural state, which they both mention in their works about Polish matters and which they use for further conclusions regarding the issues of human freedom and equality. Although Leszczyński criticized his opponent for idealized and artificial visions of human nature before, he is doing nearly the same when he determines the inherent qualities of Polish citizens. He emphasizes the idea of natural equality and freedom of all Polish citizens in absence of social bonds where "everyone can live independently *ab omni societate* like in original ages *sub lege naturae* when each inhabitant was a master of himself";<sup>65</sup> and highlights that under these conditions "without the authority of the republic which would protects its members ... everyone who was born free is also free enough to ensure his security by his own means".<sup>66</sup> His Hobbesian understanding of natural state is interesting not only as it clashes with Rousseau's concept of non-violent humanity, but also because it reveals that Leszczyński did not limit a range of citizenship just to a noble class. When he writes about the Polish serfs, he advocates the dialectical principle that nobles can be noble just because there is someone who is understood as non-noble.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, he points out that noblemen are in fact fully dependent on working class because serfs feed them, mine treasures for them, pay taxes or become soldiers, which

<sup>65</sup> "Żeby każdy mógł w niej żyć *independeter ab omni societate*, jak pierwszych wieków *sub lege naturae* kiedy każdy obywatel był sobie panem." Ibidem, 59.

<sup>66</sup> "Przy naszym nierządzie rzplta nie będąc *in statu* ani siebie ani nikogo z swoich poddanych protegere, nie dziw, że każdy prospicit swemu bezpieczeństwu ... urodziwszy się wolnym, rozumie że mu wolno uczynić się wielowładnym ... fortecę buduje, wojskowych ludzi trzyma, sam sobie sprawiedliwość czyni..." Ibidem, 118.

<sup>67</sup> "Gdyżbym nie był szlachcicem, gdyby chłop ni był chłopem, bo co zacność urodzenia mego czyni, jeżeli nie dystynkcyja, której gdyby nie było między chłopem i szlachcicem, wszyscybyśmy byli równi..." Ibidem, 101.

Leszczyński concludes as “if there were no serfs we would have to become peasants ... thus, a master emerges from a serf”<sup>68</sup>

However, one must take into account that this radical attitude to equality is promoted by Leszczyński only in matters concerning possessive relations and human dignity, because he admits that any natural state is not sustainable and as “diamonds must be polished to be bright”,<sup>69</sup> people must cooperate by exchange of experience and education. Thus, he is willing to criticize the nobles for treating their subjects as animals or even urges society to be responsible for the standard of living of its members where social justice means to contribute according to own wealth and not to let the poor to pay for the rich.<sup>70</sup> However, in political questions Leszczyński holds a strict elitist view, which is apparent especially when he defines nobles as those who “gained all the virtues and talents originally from nature”<sup>71</sup> and ascribes to them a status of the “chosen ones ... most precious men of the whole nation ... who hold their offices just from *bene emeritus*”.<sup>72</sup> The idea that noblemen should not exclude the other classes from the Polish nation, but should preserve their domination in politics, can be traced even in his proposals on necessary changes of the political system. In this regard, he advocates reforms such as weighting of votes in favour of senators or excluding the service nobility and those without property from decision-making, because those who have nothing to lose can easily sacrifice the common good for their own private interests.<sup>73</sup>

There is an important aforementioned difference between the understandings of natural state by Leszczyński and Rousseau. If Leszczyński does not deduce any political connotations from equal dignity and necessity of all humans, Rousseau sees it otherwise. The Polish nation is composed of three classes according to him: “Nobles, who count for everything, middle class who count for nothing and the peasants who count for less than nothing.”<sup>74</sup> The point is, that he is not reconciled

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<sup>68</sup> “Gdyby chłopstwa nie było, musielibyśmy się stać rolnikami, i jeżeli kogo wynosząc mówimy: pan z panów, słuszniejby mówić: pan z chłopów.” Ibidem, 101.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, 59.

<sup>70</sup> “Nie powinniśmy cierpieć ich mizeryi, w którejeśmy się sami porodzić mogli ... każdy w królestwie żyjący powinien *concurrere* do konserwacyi jego przez sprawiedliwą repartycyą, aby ubogi nie płacił za bogatego.” Ibidem, 102, 122.

<sup>71</sup> “Bo bez pochlebstwa mówie, że wszystkie cnoty i talenta są nam z przyrodzenia naturalne.” Ibidem, 58.

<sup>72</sup> “Jest to wybór najzaczniejszy całego narodu, jeżeli sędzić można, jakby być powinno, że nikt w nim nie zasiada, tylko *bene emeritus*.” Ibidem, 49.

<sup>73</sup> “Bo jak taki dbać może o ojczyznę, który w niej nie mając co stracić, snadno mu ją sakryfikować interesowi swemu partykularnemu.” Ibidem, 73.

<sup>74</sup> Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 27.

with that state and claims that Polish laws should strive to remove inequality in power and wealth, even when he warns that it will be a long run because the lower classes should not be included before the time comes. His famous exclamation “nobles of Poland, be more than nobles, be men, only when you are men will you be happy and free”<sup>75</sup> can be read as a demand how to unify the nation and not to distinguish between classes, which Rousseau underlines by his disgust against property qualifications in politics: “Is a man really the less noble – or the less free – because he owns only a tiny patch of land or no land at all? Is his poverty really so grave a crime as to cost him his rights as a citizen?”<sup>76</sup>

Now, it is finally possible to clarify the previous confusion regarding the coherence of approaches which were defended by both thinkers in the debate on *Discourses* and the considerations on the Polish question. If Leszczyński promotes natural equality and freedom, it is understandable he could be convinced that Polish national qualities are a product of nature, however, at the same time he emphasizes, that for maintaining them, it is necessary to be led by those who are experienced and have knowledge. Thus the proper systemic reforms were inevitable for him. On the contrary, Rousseau did not betray his concept of a perfect natural man in *Considerations*, because he still promoted an ideal of not only theoretical, but real social and political equality. This must be nevertheless preserved by appropriate political principles and order. If humans without social bonds were perfect due to nature, Poles can be perfect because of their contractual social state, which means, because of Poland.

There are undoubtedly many distinct and subtle similarities and differences between both considerations about the proper development of Poland. Their authors for example agree that individual negative liberty could be dangerous for republics<sup>77</sup> and both appeal to its collective positive counterpart. Similarly, they call for reducing royal privileges or want to preserve *liberum veto* as a unique and indispensable part of consensual governing as well, however, they are not able to agree for instance in questions whether Poland should be strongly centralized or transformed into federation<sup>78</sup> or how its soldiers should be recruited. All these issues are just details

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<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, 29.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem, 65.

<sup>77</sup> Leszczyński claimed that individual freedom was frequently misused in Poland because an individual opinion could prevail the meaning of the whole republic; Rousseau was convinced that “liberty is a food that is good to taste but hard to digest and only for good strong stomachs”. Leszczyński, S., *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający*, 9; Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 29.

<sup>78</sup> In this respect, Rousseau is exclaiming: “I wish you to have as many Polands as you now have of palatinates!” Rousseau, J. J., *The Government of Poland*, 26.

which can be important for a simple analysis of those two different Polish reformatory projects. They are, nevertheless, not so relevant to answer the main question of this study regarding the determination of a relationship between philosophical and political approaches of Leszczyński and Rousseau. Taking all the fundamental questions highlighted by both thinkers into account, one should conclude that despite some incoherencies and apparent paradoxes, there is a strong connection between both “debates”. It means that both authors formulated their comments on Poland with respect to their original assumptions and grounds. If Leszczyński represented a great adversary in questions of human nature and knowledge for Rousseau, one can claim that he maintained his position even in case of Poland. Hence, one should differ at least two distinct ways of the Enlightenment thought, which can be distinguished not only by different attitudes in universal philosophical issues, but also by the particular questions, such as why and how one should save the Polish state.

## ABSTRACT

### **The Polish Question as a Political Issue within Philosophical Dispute: Leszczyński versus Rousseau**

*Jan Květina*

The main focus of this paper is to put the so called Polish question into the broader context of the Enlightenment thought by providing evidence that the considerations about the proper way of political reforms issued from deeper levels of philosophical assumptions about human nature. To achieve this objective, the study analyses two distinct approaches to the Polish matters, i.e. the observations made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Stanisław Leszczyński, whose comparison should be seen as legitimate and appropriate since their former philosophical conclusions represent two distinct and even antagonistic positions. Although Leszczyński and Rousseau clashed over the ontological and epistemological questions concerning human being and later similarly drew attention to the Polish political system as well, these works dealing with Poland have been researched and interpreted only separately so far. On the contrary, this study strive for double comparative approach, which tries to clarify whether there is some strong causal dependency between the attitudes of both authors in their debate about human nature and their conclusions regarding the Polish political issues. Moreover, this enables us to determine to what extent one

can understand the Polish question as a political part of philosophical dichotomy of the Enlightenment.

**Key words:** the Enlightenment, Poland, human nature, J. J. Rousseau, S. Leszczyński

## АННОТАЦИЯ

### **Польский вопрос как политическая проблема в рамках философского диспута С. Лещинского и Ж.-Ж. Руссо**

*Ян Кветина*

Основной задачей данного исследования является рассмотрение польского вопроса в более широком философском контексте эпохи Просвещения посредством обоснования идеи о том, что в основу размышлений о надлежащем способе проведения политических реформ положены глубинные философские представления о сути человеческой природы. Для достижения данной цели в статье проводится анализ двух различных точек зрения на польскую проблематику, а именно позиций Жан-Жака Руссо и Станислава Лещинского, сравнение которых кажется нам правомерным и обоснованным ввиду полярности философских заключений данных мыслителей. Несмотря на полемику Лещинского и Руссо по вопросам онтологии и эпистемологии человеческого бытия, а также на привлечение ими внимания к проблеме польской политической системы, их работы, касающиеся Польши, до настоящего времени изучались и интерпретировались вне зависимости друг от друга. Данное исследование, напротив, исходит из двойного компаративного подхода, при помощи которого автор попытается выяснить, существует ли какая-либо существенная каузальная связь между позициями двух мыслителей в их диспуте о человеческой природе и заключениях по польской политической проблематике. Помимо этого, указанный подход позволяет определить, в какой мере польский вопрос может рассматриваться как политическая составляющая философской дихотомии эпохи Просвещения.

**Ключевые слова:** Эпоха Просвещения, Польша, природа и сущность человека, Ж.-Ж. Руссо, С. Лещинский