

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

We have the pleasure of presenting to you the first volume of a brand new journal from the field of philosophy and the history of ideas, in which we intend to grapple with the irksome problems of the present day. We especially hope to achieve this through a consideration of the perspective, historical experiences and intellectual output of European borderland countries – to use a medieval English term the lands of the ‘marches’ – while expressing matters in categories of a global system – countries of the European periphery. We shall state from the start that here our thoughts are not restricted to the Slavonic periphery, even though the journal will appear annually in Warsaw, but also the Romance, Balkans, and Scandinavian... in fact all those lands still located within the borders of the West. Peripheries, even ones distant from each other and therefore appearing to be most varied in character, in point of fact have much in common, possibly more than each of them taken separately with a centre with which it would desire an independent agreement.

These irksome problems are those that, for fundamental reasons, cannot be ignored and whose examination is made extremely difficult as a result of varied conditions both subjective and extra-subjective. In other words: these are issues that cannot be avoided in the long term and which, for an array of reasons, are inconvenient to undertake. Sometimes because these questions are so fundamental, any approach brings the risk of ridicule – for example, it is rather difficult to think of a better example of an irksome problem than the question of whether there is a God. While in other cases only because there is no way in which it can be tackled honestly without risking conflict with ‘unquestionable’ convictions and authorities, or one’s own conscience independent of these, at least in principle. An example of this type of irksome problem could be served by the recently widely debated question as to the origin of anti-establishment traditionalism – termed ‘populism’ in media language – or the establishment and universalism of human rights.

These problems are never as obvious and forceful as they are in a crisis situation. This very situation may be even defined through indicating the meaning obtained in it – for we would be dealing with a crisis when irksome problems most persistently demand their rights. Yet just such a crisis is an exceptional calling and opportunity for the humanist as much as it is for the periphery – for in a situation where the old models and cognitive schemes no longer satisfy, whose incompatibility with reality increasingly becomes obvious, the humanist, in so far as s/he has remained faithful to his calling, becomes essential to matters. Only s/he is able to develop an apt fresh diagnosis of reality. This is the right moment to act, a moment for which some wait their whole lives in vain. All the more

for the periphery – because in a moment of crisis, peripherality moves from an assumed defect to something that constitutes a genuine advantage, something that has been more or less understood by all periphery critics of culture from Ortega y Gasset and Berdyaev through to Gombrowicz and Jerzy Stempowski. If the source of the crisis is external danger it is easier for this to be observed by someone located on the sidelines, while if these processes are internal ones, resulting in the ‘self-poisoning’ of culture, then either the periphery will remain outside of its range or will succumb to their influences. In the first case, peripherality makes it easier to cover the distance needed for its diagnosis, while in the second, it will supply exceptionally drastic examples of the impact of destructive tendencies, ones often taking on a simplified and extreme form at the margins, often making their diagnosis easier as a result.

As the editors and co-creators of the journal, something borne out by the subtitle, we are consciously linking ourselves to the tradition of the Warsaw School of the Historians of Ideas. And we are doing so for many reasons. The most eminent of the School’s representatives were undoubtedly periphery intellectuals, who, admittedly, not without trials and tribulations strove to finally measure up with the calling of their times. The most acclaimed of these, Leszek Kołakowski, is after all a demonstrative example of just such an intellectual if not even a virtuosos of peripherality itself, who like few others was able to take advantage of its prerogatives. It is equally difficult to consider as completely obsolete the research tradition, methods, and the very style of conducting the humanities that was advanced by the School; it still retains its worth as a source of inspiration and model for creative emulation. This concerns just as much the lucid language of its representatives always constituting an elegant alternative to the post-structural grand eloquence. It is obvious that without a command of the history of ideas there is quite simply no possibility of keeping up with the social, cultural and ‘spiritual’ processes we observe and of diagnosing them in an adequate manner. At the same time it is difficult not to appreciate the School’s limitations, imposed on it to a large degree as a result of external circumstances and their inability to overcome these – the most significant limitation was the reproductiveness inseparable from all research into intellectual history. We hope that within the pages of *The Interlocutor* original philosophical thought will appear side by side with the history of ideas, at least the journal is open to the possibility and prepared for its inclusion.

We have decided to publish the journal in English which might strike one as somewhat inconsistent and a concession to the realities of the contemporary world, given that the premise of the periodical is to boost the notion of peripherality and place it on a par with the ‘centre.’ But the dominance of English is a fact which one can only accept, even if its hegemony results rather from a political ordering of forces than aesthetic or communicative virtues derived from an otherwise efficient medium (as opposed to the Italian hegemony in Renaissance Europe, being in its time merely the derivative of the cultural predominance of a politically weak Italy and the irresistible charm of the Tuscan tongue). In this respect it has much in common with the very separation between the

centre and periphery being the consequence of the actual political and economic order of forces, but not reflecting at all a hierarchy of cultural values. Until we talk of war and trade, the opposition of the centre/ periphery is value judgement, one that immediately falls apart if we are to shift to cultural solutions – and in this sense it should be treated merely as a descriptive designation.

There lies a double allusion in the journal's title: to the well-known poem by Fyodor Tyutchev – eagerly read by one of the leading representatives of the Warsaw School, Andrzej Walicki, and earlier by his mentor Hessen – and to the specific status of an intellectual from the periphery. In the poem *Cycceron*, Tyutchev writes that 'whoever has to live in a fateful moment deciding on the lot of the world then they shall be invited to a feast of the happy gods and shall be their joint reveller and interlocutor'. Tyutchev's poem may be interpreted in various ways yet in each of these interpretations its fundamental message remains – that life in an era of crisis with all its accompanying discomforts and difficulties is an exceptional privilege. In particular it relates to the figure about which we have just been talking – to the humanist fulfilling his vocation during times of confusion. In addition, if s/he were to have come from the periphery s/he would turn out not merely like all his/her contemporaries – though possibly to a slightly greater degree than them – the gods' interlocutor but, as a result of his/her very condition as a humanist, the interlocutor of a privileged centre instead.

The relation between the centre and the periphery is, obviously, asymmetric. An intellectual from the centre, in addressing the periphery – for example, visiting it with a series of guest lectures – has no reason to fear that s/he will not be heard. For this is guaranteed by his/her very status and the standing of the place from which s/he comes – the periphery has a duty to take an interest in the affairs of the centre. An intellectual from the periphery making the opposite journey finds themselves in a far less comfortable position – they have the obligation to have a good grasp of the problems of the host and when they do not interest their audience with their message, the threat of being downright ignored. This is, by definition, a dialogic creature, borne out by the fact that one may not be heard out. It is also a richer subject that one of broader horizons than its interlocutor, obliged to not only have a good grasp of their own affairs and an interest in their own fate, and as a result of the particular value of being heard out.

The main theme for this, the inaugural edition of *The Interlocutor*, is ideology, which still remains a significant force in the contemporary world, though sometimes hiding its real nature and taking on forms different from those of the past. The stronger the influence of ideology on reality the more difficult this impact is to diagnose; for within ideology itself a mechanism is installed making it difficult to discuss it from extra-ideological positions. This makes ideology an irksome problem and means that in a world succumbed to its power, any rational conversation about it often seems inappropriate. The reader should bear this in mind when reaching for the articles contained in this the first edition, one devoted to the phenomenon of ideology as such as well as its appearance in the world.

FROM THE EDITOR

The works of Małgorzata Kowalska, Krzysztof Świrek and Andrzej Gniazdowski are found within, aiding in a grasp of the nature of ideology, although this is far from the only goal set out by the authors in question. Sławomir Mazurek proposes a comparative analysis of the current influential neo-ideologies, while Marcin Król, Marzena Adamiak and Justyna Melonowska, on various levels of generality, deal with their concrete examples respectively: neo-liberalism, genderism, and Catholic conservatism in Karol Wojtyła's rendering.

Drawing on the intellectual resources of the periphery would be inconceivable without some form of critical reflection into the styles of thinking about the world and ideas formed in the past. Thus within *The Interlocutor* there will be a permanent section called 'Periphery Schools', devoted to a presentation of the main currents within the intellectual history of the countries of Europe's 'marches'. In the first edition, we can find texts devoted to the achievements of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, in other words that very tradition that is the dearest to us. This is opened by Paweł Śpiewak's article 'Midway Along the Road', in which the phenomenon of the School is described for the first time, although this piece was originally published way back in the 1970s in Polish in one of the underground opposition publications. In addition, we have included Andrzej Walicki's reply to this article, in which the School's research principles and style of thinking were formulated by one of its most eminent representatives, and also a study by Marta Bucholc – looking at the School's tradition from the perspective of the present. The whole is completed by an equally contemporary attempt by Andrzej Leder to undertake a critical and, simultaneously, comparative analysis of the style of thought of the most important representatives of the School.

The Interlocutor's ambition fully understood, including all that has been said, is just as much a tracing of intellectual life on the peripheries. Within the review section, we have included the latest book publications in an array of languages. This part of the inaugural edition is chiefly composed of reviews of works by the representatives of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas or monographs devoted to them. There is room here to discuss a Polish publishing initiative constituting a continuation of Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey's *A History of Political Philosophy*, which came about within the circles of the so-called 'Chicago School'. We hope that in subsequent editions of the journal we shall have the opportunity to broadly inform our readership about original thinking worthy of attention.

The reader will clearly notice that the articles included here are written from various positions and do not necessarily agree in their conclusions. Our editorial policy is to invite anyone who has something worthy to say to publish within our journal; this being completely unconnected with their worldview or personal views, and therefore to enable a real debate to develop – using S. L. Frank's designation – beyond left and right. It is our conviction that the present times require such a debate. To anyone who is interested in taking part and tackling the irksome problems of contemporaneity, we most cordially invite you to participate in the undertaking.

Sławomir Mazurek, Andrzej Gniazdowski