Andrzej Antoszewski, *Współczesne teorie demokracji*,
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Habent sua fata libelli, said the ancients – not knowing just how strange can be the fates of books after millennia. Andrzej Antoszewski wrote a book which then received all required reviews, underwent the full editing and printing process, and yet somehow in the end got stuck in the vast warehouses of the publishing house – and not because the views expressed by the author did not find favour in the eyes of the powers that be. It is true that the text contains a number of comments on the undemocratic changes carried out by Victor Orban in Hungary, allegedly an ally of the current ruling party in Poland – however, knowing the quality of Polish diplomacy in recent years, just that fact alone could not be the reason for such a drastic decision. In this particular case, this book (alongside several others, in fact) became a hostage in a game played by va-

rious officials of the overinflated administration of the Polish parliament. The entire situation is a perfect example of how science can indeed be objectified.

What can be clearly said is that Antoszewski, a well-known Wrocław scholar, authored a book worthy of the highest recommendation to all who deal with political topics – both political scientists and more or less professional politicians. However, this work is not a typical textbook presenting in a systematic, well-ordered manner the huge body of knowledge about democracy. My honest encouragement to read it is due to a completely different set of reasons.

First of all, the title of the book, *Współczesne teorie demokracji* [Contemporary Theories of Democracy], is completely misleading. The author freely presents a variety of concepts of democracy formulated throughout history, starting from those originating in Ancient Greece. Even if we adopt Professor Antoszewski's view that it is worth focusing particularly on theories of

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democracy created after World War II, and even more so on those arisen after 1974, we are still going back over 70 years. Of course, one could limit oneself only to the last ten years, as it is done in empirical scientific articles in journals with Impact Factor, but without reaching back to the originals, i.e. concepts initially formulated several years, and sometimes even several decades prior, it simply makes little sense to write about any idea or theory.

Secondly, Andrzej Antoszewski constantly criticizes all possible theories he refers to. Most often the critique takes the form of a confrontation with facts, less often is a denunciation of illogicality or irrelevance of the supposedly significant criteria taken into account when constructing a given theory. Knowledge is not a collection of truths to believe in unthinkingly. Quite the reverse – the task of every scholar is to strive for the truth, and it is possible only through continuous and comprehensive, substantive questioning of the existing models and frameworks, including all theories. Antoszewski is not only able to, in a highly *ad meritum* manner, pinpoint the shortcomings of theoretical concepts, but also shows openly how he does it. For every beginner academic or scientist and for every person willing to empirically face political reality such instruction is priceless. Verifying each fact that we are provided and every theory fed to

us as truth is a prerequisite for survival as an independent subject in the social domain.

Thirdly, the author refrains from drawing unambiguous conclusions both at the end of each of the four chapters in the book and at the end of his work. This is probably due to his awareness of impossibility of formulating one universal definition of democracy, its types or processes of democratization and de-democratization. If one accepts pluralism of theoretical approaches and is open to perceiving the weaknesses of each of those, one is unable to fully stand behind one of them. Such a research approach is, I believe, one of the most mature ones encountered among political scientists. When – and as long as – we are conducting specific, monographic empirical studies, we must adopt one coherent theoretical perspective. However, if we want to understand various political processes in a holistic and multifaceted manner, then we must necessarily accept the pluralism of theoretical approaches.

Współczesne teorie demokracji is a book that can be fully recommended to everyone, not just to students. The key value of this publication does not lie in schooling the readers in a multitude of names or definitions – in this respect, encyclopedias remain unrivaled. Much more important is that thanks to this book one can learn how to think.