

Book reviews

Book review

Davor Rodin

Prijepis politike
(*Transcription of Politics*)Školska knjiga
Zagreb, 1995, 364 pages

Under the title *Transcription of Politics* the author is publishing twenty studies from the area of political theory, political philosophy and methodology of political science. Some of the studies have already been published, and some are being published for the first time. The author is trying to challenge and sometimes to relate two modern methodological procedures. One is that initiated by Niklas Luhmann, who varied the originally modern theory of systems; the other is one which could be called hermeneutics of speech and writing. In some methodological comments, Rodin suggests that Luhmann's theory of autopoiesis was inspired by media hermeneutics Luhmann tackled independently. It cannot be said that Rodin managed to rewrite consistently the classical material of political philosophy and political theory by means of these methods, but one could not deny that he provided some research direction for the contemporary Croatian political theory.

The book title *Transcription of Politics* has an obvious methodological character. It does not suggest the book contents, but the method by means of which the freely selected content was dealt with. The method chosen by the author can be briefly described as fol-

lows: politics is, undoubtedly, a form of action. In various political theories this action undergoes a rational, logical-grammatical transcription. What is traditionally called a theory is in its essence a logical-grammatical transcription of political action. The term transcription might be misleading. One might think that it refers to an interpretative transcription of one text against another or to literal transcription. Therefore, we believe that, for a better understanding, the author could have selected a longer and much clearer title, for example: "A Logical-Grammatical Review of Political Action". Nevertheless, the reader will have a rather clear idea about the author's intention. A logical-grammatical review of political action strongly rejects the concept of the practice which defines political action as a form of applied theory. For Rodin, the transcription of political action does not have the character of theory which would incline to application or which would have pretensions to make people aware of the practice, to refine the practice or to raise it to a higher level. The logical-grammatical transcription or the review of political action can, of course, acquire the above features, which eventually took place as is shown in the history of political theories. However, Rodin wants to make sure that political action and his logical-grammatical review are not at all related, especially not causally. Logic and grammar follow their own "game" rules since political action has, naturally, its own rules. Both "games" are incommensurable. Each practical application of a "theory" is disappointing and no "theory" is capable of fully presenting the content of action. At this point, it seems to Rodin that Luhmann followed the same lines in his autopoietic rewriting of the theory of systems. His concept of autopoiesis

explains systems in such a way that it becomes clear that they are both semantically and pathologically (Kant) irritated by their environment, but they respond to these irritations quite independently or, in other words, solely on the basis of their own internal game rules. The systems and the environment have nothing in common: in any kind of contact, the environment responds following its own "logic" and the political system responds following its own. These two responses are quite autonomous. Undoubtedly, such methodological results are disappointing for all those who have so far seen the theory as something sacred, spiritual and exceptional, something above or beyond practice. Now they have to think differently. Certainly, it is possible to live without theory (theory is not thinking) as well as without politics. This is only to emphasize the author's intentions: he himself is not so radical. He is more cautious than our evaluation. Since the author fails to apply these insights consistently because they have been gained painstakingly, we ought to mention another intention of his which followed the course of presentation. The point is that the author indirectly blames the entire Croatian contemporary theory for not taking into account the semantic turning-point in the Western theory of the twentieth century. This turning-point was reached in the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Wittgenstein and Rodin thinks that such achievements should not be neglected in the "political theory". The author believes that the constitution of a liberal democratic political community should not be discussed without being aware that each constitution, either written or practiced, represents a form of "oblivion" of the real political life in the form of the logical structure and articulation of the constitutional text, i.e. constitutional experience. If we consider the author's methodological intentions, we can accept a certain degree of the content self-will. The pre-

sented material has obviously been generated from directed speeches, lectures and post-graduate courses. This is neither good nor bad in itself. Today a university lecturer is torn between symposia, lecturing as visiting professor, colloquia, teaching obligations. Research in its strict sense is neither financed nor possible to conduct with otherwise desirable strictness. And again, finding excuses for the author where he could be undoubtedly criticized, we emphasize that Rodin has no adequate interlocutor in contemporary theoretical debates in Croatia who would either stimulate or redirect him. He acquired the methodology as described above and his aim is to develop it according to his best insights and intellectual forces. In order to fully achieve this goal, all the circumstances and the complete intellectual life here and now should be changed. We cannot blame Rodin for the incompetencies of our milieu. On the contrary.

The book is divided into four thematic areas:

I. Illusions about possible political stabilization of civil society. In this part the author represents Kant's, Fichte's and Hegel's political philosophy pointing to traps, illusions and antinomies of the logical arrangement of human political community as a state of modern, free individuals.

II. Lost illusions about possible political stabilization of civil society. In this part the author mainly deals with the political theory of Carl Schmitt presenting his critique of liberal democracy and the accompanying theories of rational management of political life.

III. Neo-scientific strategies of civil society stabilization. In this part, using texts by N. Luhmann and H. Lubbe the author suggests that modern science has influenced politics by relativizing its courses. Political life is a never ending process without a fixed aim. Problems appear and disappear and

reappear. Politics is without a rational, ideological and utopian emphasis an activity resolving only those life problems which cannot be resolved otherwise. This is the message of this part of the book.

IV. Methodological experiences. In this part of the book the author states his own positions. Contrary to the introduction, in this part it is the semantics of political processes that is in the focus and not autopoiesis and hermeneutics of speech and writing. The conclusions do not fulfill the promises made in the introduction. Such an outcome suggests that the author was not writing the book as a German would, knowing in advance its beginning and end, but more like a Frenchman who never knows how to finish what he started. In defense of the author we might put it like this: the message of the book would gain intensity if the book started with the fourth part and ended with the first. However, is it an objection, advice, or an impression? Is the book aimed at general readership or experts? Those who know will easily understand what they have gained, and those who do not should wait for further explanations by the author. The author is still alive and lives in Zagreb.

We witnessed the progress of the here presented book and we have already stated our major objections within our small scientific community. As far as we can see, the author has accepted most of the objections, and therefore, we are pleased to recommend this book which can help its readers gain substantial insight into political debates in Croatia at the turn of the 20th century. Rodin is a reliable witness to these debates.

Zvonko Posavec

Translated by
Mirna Varlandy-Supek

Vladimir Vujčić

Politička tolerancija
(*Political Tolerance*)

Defimi, Zagreb 1995, 186 pages

The year 1995 was the UN "Year of Tolerance". The rationale for that was the fact that there is no democracy without tolerance and that huge human efforts must go towards increasing tolerance.

The research of political tolerance has been motivated by its significance for democracy which cannot function properly without the political consensus on major social issues and without political tolerance. For theoreticians of liberalism, political tolerance is even more important for democracy than political consensus since it is linked with the question of social power and the question of a peaceful resolution of social conflicts.

The importance of tolerance has brought about the development of the theory of tolerance (analogous to the theory of freedom or the theory of democracy, etc.) which has been trying to explain the essence and the meaning of tolerance. The major debates on tolerance today focus on the question whether tolerance is the final (target) value (a value which determines the meaning of human existence) or only an instrumental value meant as a means of realizing certain ultimate human values.

In this study Vladimir Vujčić does not investigate the importance of tolerance for democracy and different opinions about that matter, but offers a comprehensive review of various issues related to tolerance. For example,