



Panagiotis Kondylis (2019), *Polityka światowa po zimnej wojnie [Planetary Politics after the Cold War]*, translated by H. Samulska (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Marszałek, pp. 202)

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*Planetary Politics after the Cold War* is a book by an eminent Greek philosopher, active in the circle of German-language philosophy, and is at the same time the author's first work translated into Polish. In the very good translation by Hanna Samulska together with an extensive foreword by Filip Olkiewicz and Lech Zieliński, it should be a must-read for anyone attempting to understand the complexities of the modern world. The text was first published in 1994, at the same time as two other famous works dealing with similar themes: Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* (1992) and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993). The Polish reader will therefore have the opportunity to compare three different visions of the future and draw his or her own conclusions. The forecasts of the Greek thinker are marked by balance and sceptical sobriety, far removed from the drama of the conflict between civilisations and the end of history.

The introduction to the Polish edition contains extensive information on the biography and work of Panagiotis Kondylis (1943–1998). So far, several fragments of the philosopher's larger works have been translated into Polish, but no book has yet been published in its entirety.<sup>1</sup> When reading *Planetary Politics after the Cold War* it is worth remembering a few facts that influenced the specific style and philosophical profile of its au-

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<sup>1</sup> More about the translations of Kondylis's texts into Polish and the reception of his works in the introduction to the philosopher's interview with Marin Terpstra published in: Panajotis Kondylis, "O swoich dziełach i myśli swojej – wywiad udzielony Marinowi Terpstszemu w 1994 roku", transl. by N. Chodorowska in: *Studia z Historii Filozofii* 3, 9 (2018): 43–65.

thor. First of all, it should be stressed that Kondylis wrote mainly in German (he translated most of his works into Greek by himself), he did not pursue an academic career at any university, although he participated intensely in the academic life of Germany and Greece. This independence from academic institutions created a convenient space for the development of independent creativity, unrestrained by the university's canons. The unusual nature of the work in question is manifested, for example, in the fact that it does not contain any footnotes or polemics with clearly identified adversaries; this, however, should not lead us to believe that the author ignores the classic methodology of scholarly work. Already in his first book, *Die Entstehung der Dialektik. Eine Analyse der geistigen Entwicklung von Hölderlin, Schelling und Hegel bis 1802* published in 1979, and especially in the monograph highly acclaimed by specialists *Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus* (1981)<sup>2</sup> and in many other later works, Kondylis made himself known as an insightful historian of philosophy, who relies on the vast source literature and at the same time makes bold meta-philosophical syntheses. His proficiency in 6 languages undoubtedly helped him to build his own stance. Undoubtedly, the broad range of research interests and rarely encountered erudition is really impressive. Kondylis did not limit himself to the development of philosophical creativity, he was also intensely involved in the publication of many translations into Greek in such published series as: "Philosophical and Political Library" (1983–1998; 60 volumes) and "Modern European Civilization" (1997–2000; 12 volumes), making the works of Hobbes, Lyotard, Foucault, ancient Greek sophists and cynics, Sorel, Heidegger, Burckhardt, Michels, Aron, Leo Strauss, Derrida, Locke, and others available to Greek readers.

Thus, we can consider Kondylis as a philosopher who held the legacy of the past in high esteem and at the same time demonstrated sensitivity to the problems of the present. *Planetary politics after the Cold War* is written in difficult, but vivid, language that reflects the philosopher's characteristic independent thinking.

In the first, most extensive part of the book entitled *Planetary Politics in the Mass Democracy Era* (pp. 33–105), Kondylis presents predictions of the development of international politics, which include many still valid hypotheses and observations. He begins his analysis by outlining the historical context in which the formation of world politics emerged. An important thesis here is the idea that the formation of this type of politics should be seen as a continuous process that began to have a clear shape from the time of the discovery of modernity (16<sup>th</sup> century), when

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<sup>2</sup> The article summarizing the most important theses of this monograph was published in Polish: Panajotis Kondylis, "W poszukiwaniu istoty oświecenia", transl. by L. Zieliński, *Studia z Historii Filozofii* 1, 7 (2016): 75–95.

the global colonial system and the global market emerged. The turning point in the development of planetary politics was the victory of the liberal and industrial revolution, which led to a dense network of global economic and political connections. According to Kondylis, the rise of European liberal movements coincided with the classic era of imperialism. The philosopher convincingly argues in favour of the thesis that world politics was shaped by empires almost until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when mass democracy began to gradually replace oligarchic liberalism within developed nations.

The author does not hide his objections to the ideology associated with the emergence of a mass society, which is characterized by serious disproportions, although it preaches the equality of its members and grants them the same rights. As a result, the lower layers of the global community appear on the international scene with a greater sense of self-esteem, and the boundaries between the subjects and objects of world politics are becoming more fluid. According to Kondylis, this, in turn, will be a constant source of future conflicts, which will be intensified by the requirement of democratization, i.e. the participation of mobile masses in politics and social life. The gradual expansion of the human and civil rights package will, on the other hand, entail the need to introduce economic modernization and launch economic growth. It is impossible to disagree with this forecast, as well as with the view that the very concept of politics, about which the author writes in Chapter 2 (pp. 56–66), has changed. Kondylis criticizes both liberal and Marxist positions, in which he conceptually separates the sphere of politics and economics, trying unsuccessfully at the practical level to integrate both areas. According to Kondylis, such integration takes place under the conditions of mass democracy, but it does not mean the abandonment or progressive weakening of politics.

The dependence of mass life on a technologically advanced and productive economy means that the combination of politics and economy will extend into every field of world politics. However, Kondylis does not think that this development will go so far as to prevent a return to interventionism and protectionism. The open question for the future, then, is whether all borders will be removed or new economic empires will be established against which further borders will be built.

The analyses in Chapter 3 (pp. 67–78) concerning the future of the sovereign state seem particularly interesting. Kondylis disagrees with the predictions that states will lose their sovereignty to supranational organisms and, consequently, to the emergence of a world society and a world government. He sees two types of mythology at the root of this view: the democratic mythology, in which the state is considered to be an oppressive system that stifles economic freedom and freedom movements in the interests of those in power, and the authoritarian mythology,

which presents the state as an autonomous entity above all classes and particular interests. Referring to examples from recent history, he shows that the dominance of universal ethical principles on the main lines of international politics has largely favoured the interests of certain states and this trend is unlikely to change, although the balance of power between the leading world powers may change. It also rightly points out that the real autonomy of the internationalised sector of the private economy over weakened states would lead to a state of deep lawlessness.

In the next chapter (pp. 79–92) Kondylis argues that the existing bipolar division of the world will change. In addition to the strongest world power (the USA), regional powers will emerge, which will compete more and more effectively for primacy in international politics. This in turn will contribute to regional conflicts around the world. Mass Western-like democracies will exist alongside authoritarian pseudo-parliamentary systems or dictatorships – and economically or nationally coherent areas alongside multinational states or linguistically and religiously loose state communities.

In the last chapter of the first part (pp. 93–105), the author addresses the issue of bio-politics, which is extremely relevant today. In his opinion, the greatest threat to the world order will come when widespread dissatisfaction caused by inequalities in the redistribution of goods combined with a demographic explosion will get out of the control of the internal policies of individual countries. Then the conflicts will no longer exist between individual states and the biological factor will begin to dominate – the struggle for survival, which will lead to the mass emigration of people in search of goods and resources, questioning borders between states and leading to the replacement of interstate conflicts with interpersonal conflicts.

The second part of the monograph (pp. 106–125) discusses the issue of nationalism in the context of mass democratic modernisation. Kondylis does not share the view that nationalistic tendencies referring to radicalised traditionalism constitute a rebellion against the rationality of the technologicalized world and utilitarianism of the rule of law. He stresses that the new versions of Eastern European and Balkan nationalisms awakened after the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc were not solely separatist in nature, but that their purpose was to be accepted into the global community. The nationalisms appearing on a global scale, especially European ones, are, in his opinion, based on a combination of national, cultural, and economic demands. Kondylis is quite clearly in favour of defending sovereignty within the nation state as an antidote to the hegemony of world politics conducted by superpowers. A nation integrated by a common interest forms the basis of stability for internal politics within the global community. Kondylis also pays attention to the anti-Western version of nationalism, which after the revolution in Iran,

became widespread in Islamic countries. A little hastily, from today's perspective, he is not afraid of a possible increase in fundamentalist tendencies, which aim at restoring the pre-democratic and pre-planetary world. He argues that radicalised traditionalism is in fact a suspended and hidden process of modernization under the pressure of very dense world politics, and not a sterile "reaction" in the current sense.

In the third part (pp. 126–144), the reader has the opportunity to learn about Kondylis's position on the future of new means of warfare, which are becoming more democratic and flexible with time. Comparable access to weapons and a similar level of armament mean that only rapid wars have a chance of being successful, making it possible to take advantage of the surprise effect. Kondylis does not believe that nuclear weapons will be used in future conflicts. The vast majority of conflicts will be regional in nature with little interest from large powers. Comparing the earlier forms of war to those of today and tomorrow, he states that in the age of modern technology, the differences between civil and military applications are disappearing, making the transition between peace and war more fluid.

In the fourth part (pp. 145–161) the author describes the blurring of basic concepts in the area of contemporary political reflection as well as everyday journalism. The lack of clear demarcation lines between conservatism, liberalism, and the left might mean a risk of the transition of political life into a state of post-ideological chaos. Kondylis's prediction that the hypothetical "end of ideology" may lead to the escalation of de-ideologized fights, which will be more violent than the conflicts based on the ideological basis, seems ominously accurate today. This will happen when politics is completely merged with the economy and references to non-utilitarian values disappear from the strategic field.

The fifth chapter (pp. 162–181) contains reflections on the links between world politics and universalist ethics; ethics which refers to the rationality of the discourse and naively believes that the very care for logical consistency can overcome the dilemmas of classical ethics of the virtues and later historicism as well as sociological and ethnological relativism. A utopian belief in the power of better argument and the moral maturity of societies that have recovered from the traumas of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century totalitarianisms turns out to be another illusion, ignoring the anthropological properties of the human species. Kondylis exposes this attitude as a simple consequence of the consolidation of world politics and the world economy, which are in need of unification. The reader will also find in this section critical comments on the proposal for the universalization of human rights. The author shows the unenforceability of these rights. On the one hand, no state can guarantee that e.g. the right to physical integrity or freedom of speech can be exercised beyond its own borders. On the other hand, no state can grant all people without

exception certain rights that are still considered as civil rights, such as the right to vote or the right to permanent residence. The practical implementation of the slogans of human rights, which would ignore specific social and biological conditions, as well as the diversity of existing axiological systems, would mean the end of a sovereign state. Therefore, Kondylis recommends a cautious attitude in the face of possible consequences related to the willingness to use this rhetoric by the masses deprived of access to accumulated goods in more developed countries. Fidelity to the universalist ideas of human rights therefore requires appropriate preparation for the confrontation with the crisis that will be caused by the inevitable wave of migration motivated by the desire to improve material status.

In the last part (pp. 182–202) Kondylis discusses communism in its combination with Western anti-communism as the force that contributed to the flourishing of mass democracy. The communist slogans calling for the battle against imperialism and colonialism, the visions of a classless society or a fairer distribution of wealth indirectly influenced the political and social changes in the capitalist countries, where after the Second World War the demand for greater material equality and egalitarianism of power began. According to Kondylis, the fall of communism was not the result of the failure of communist ideology, but was due to the economic advantage of the West, and in fact it was a symptom of the failure of utopia in the clash with realism.

This book by Kondylis is an excellent example of his style of philosophizing and the wide range of his interests. The philosopher combines here an advanced, logically coherent philosophical reflection with references to empirical and historical facts. He does not avoid bold, polemical theses, showing great insight and responsible use of words. At the same time, he avoids unambiguous assessments, hasty diagnoses, and invariably uses an axiologically neutral description of historical and social processes. The tendency to blur the artificial academic boundaries between philosophy, anthropology, economics, history, and sociology, which is present in the author's other works, can also be seen here. This is an unquestionable advantage of the book, which may be interesting to a wide circle of readers. Kondylis, when read carefully, can be seen as an all-round observer of human affairs, an anthropologist with political zeal, a sophisticated historian of ideas, a social theorist, and sometimes simply a writer. However, these faces of the thinker can be summarized by the reflexive face of the independent social philosopher, who could probably be compared only to Max Weber.

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