Introduction

Jakub Szczepanski
Jagiellonian University

This volume contains texts presented at the Summer School of Political Epistemology, organized by the Kantian Political Thought Standing Group of the European Consortium for Political Resarch ECPR), held on July 27-31, 2020. The school was co-convened by Keele University and Jagiellonian University, jointly with the ECPR. The purpose of the meeting was to give scholars of varying degrees of academic careers the opportunity to meet and discuss key methodological issues in normative political theory, in particular in political epistemology. During the school, lectures were given by accomplished scholars, and papers were also presented by doctoral students and scholars with doctoral degrees.

Presentation topics included the role of knowledge and justification in politics; the problem of deep disagreement; epistemic injustice; democracy and its problems; the role of theory in politically relevant epistemic processes; constructivist and contractualist accounts of justice; the role of sincerity and trust in politics; the epistemic value of electoral processes; the use of ignorance in political processes, including populism, propaganda and manipulation; uncertainty and freedom of speech.

Among the many papers presented, this volume includes articles by authors conducting research in many different countries (Estonia, Germany, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom) and who are at different stages of their research careers.

What exactly are the topics covered by the texts presented here? First of all, if we are talking about political epistemology, then the question of truth undoubtedly becomes one of the primary issues. With regard to this question Wes Siscoe, in an article entitled: "Epistemic Democracy and the Truth Connection," asks about so-called epistemic democracy and its relationship to truth. In the theory of democracy of this type, it is assumed that the role of truth is very significant. Underlying such a claim is the belief that democratic institutions do truth-tracking better than other political institutions. This belief, called Truth-Tracking, in its turn, has to do with the thesis that in a democracy, a citizen is expected to justify his or her own beliefs, even if this justification is purely internal. This kind of reasoning, in its turn, is what Truth-Tracking requires. In the author's view, however, there is a problem related to the question of the equivalence of a justified belief and one that strives for truth. One does not necessarily correspond to the other. At the level of deliberation, Justification does not necessarily bring us closer to the truth. And here, an important question arises: Should we prefer Justification or Truth-Tracking in the face of deliberative democracy? If the truth in a community begins to be hidden and manipulated, the need for whistleblowing arises.

The question of the role and meaning of this phenomenon is answered by Linyu Jing in a text entitled: "Speaking Truth to Power? A Foucauldian Theory of

Whistleblowing in A Nihilistic World." According to the theory described by the author, a whistleblower is focused on "speaking truth to power." As is well known, power has an indelible tendency to manipulate the truth and treat it in an instrumental way. Whistleblowing can thus be seen as a "practice of freedom", in the sense of normative engagement in political discourse, aimed at "recreating" truth-telling subjectivity.

But the problem arises if the truth we seek does not exist. The pluralist approach and the related conflicts are described by Manuel Knoll in the text "The Significance of Deep Disagreements on Justice, Values, and Morals for Political Epistemology." The subject of this article is the extremely important question of the reference point of political epistemology, namely, "knowledge about values, the good, and about what is just and morally right." According to the author, political struggles are part of the fundamental dispute about values, about what is "God" and what is "Devil." Following Max Weber, the author states that there is no knowledge that can guide "a politician's decisions and actions in the struggle of values and ideals." Isaiah Berlin's value pluralism thesis is also important to the author here. This is how the conclusion of "deep disagreement" is arrived at, as the claim that "there is no possibility to rationally arbitrate between ideals or to rationally resolve value conflicts." Since consensus is not possible, the primary task of political epistemology becomes the search for knowledge, in order to reduce conflicts and enable peaceful coexistence.

Another epistemic problem in modern politics is the difficulty of defining basic concepts with pragmatic meaning. An example of such an issue is the problem described by Jaanika Erne of defining the meaning of the term "democracy." This author, in her text: "Defining Democracy for the European Union", focuses on the limitations of defining the principle of democracy in EU law, where the reference point is the Kantian ontological categorization. The problem, of course, is the lack of a clear definition of democracy, which can lead to a methodological void. What we need, then, are meta-categories, through which it will be possible to correctly determine what the nature of the concept under analysis is. How to realize this postulate? Here the author proposes to capture the EU principle of democracy through a constructed system of seven categories, which allowed various classifications "diachronically and synchronously", while difficulties will be generated by the political nature of the concept. This is because the questions "Which?", "Where?", "When?", "Who?", "What?" and "How?" lend themselves to empirical investigation. Only the question „Why?" will unveil the explanatory dimension.

One significant problem in political epistemology is raised by the question of the possession of knowledge in the context of the choices made. Kristoffer Ahlstrom-Vij, in his text: "Political Knowledge: Measurement, Elitism, and Dogmatism," shows the importance of the question of measurability of knowledge so understood and then its significance in political elections. This is because political knowledge can be seen as a certain resource: having a large amount of such a resource means that we are able to do well in the political world and, consequently, that we are more likely to combine

our political goals with effective means. To demonstrate the difference of having such a stock of knowledge, so-called counterfactual modelling is used. Faced with the objection that scales of knowledge determine certain assumptions, it can be answered that even if political knowledge understood in this way gives rise to dogmatism, this dogmatism can be expected to perform a protective function in the hostile epistemic environment that the political domain represents.

In addition to the primary epistemic issues related to the role and importance of truth in politics, we also have other issues, such as the question of social justice. Questions in this area are answered by John E. Roemer in the article: "Epistemological Issues in Equal Opportunity Theory." The article's author poses the question: what is the optimal policy of equal opportunities? The general answer to this question is that it is a policy that will compensate disadvantaged types with resources that will improve their income distributions. Romer's Equal Opportunity Theory is supposed to answer this question precisely. Its main application is the fair treatment of individuals competing for desirable positions in society.

As can be seen from the preceding brief summary of the articles included in the volumes of this special issue, political epistemology touches on a number of extremely important issues. By taking up epistemic considerations, we situate ourselves at the same time on a meta-level. The range of topics that can arise in this field may therefore also be discussed when considering the relation of this field with others. Since politics and political philosophy in general open up a wide range of considerations, an investigation of the epistemological dimension of these considerations will also have wide scope, as shown by the wide range of topics presented here.

I thank Sorin Baiasu for the co-convening of the Summer School and the ECPR for looking after the administrative aspects of the event and for helping us to organise the event.

j.szczepanski@iphils.uj.edu.pl