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Editorial The Notion of Political Power in Medieval and Renaissance Thought

With the formation of the idea of *Christianitas* in Europe, reflection on the relationship between human nature and political power acquired an additional dimension. By maintaining, at least in part, what Hellenic thought had established, Christianity introduced a new category to political and legal reflection, that of divine revealed law – *lex divina*. Revelation is primarily eschatological and individual in nature – it shows man the way to salvation. At the same time, however, this issue is not politically indifferent. While in Saint Augustine of Hippo's philosophy the question of the Christian dimension of politics and political power do not seem to play a key role, this problem takes on a different meaning within the new context of *Christianitas*. Should the Christian ruler not also consider the eternal happiness of his subjects? And if so, what should the relationship between human law (*lex humana*), focused on temporal happiness, order and peace, and revealed divine law be like? Should divine law also cover temporal issues and decisions to an extent?

As a consequence, the Middle Ages became an age in which one of the fundamental issues in political and legal reflection was the relationship between the spiritual and secular authorities. Reference was made to the New Testament account of Jesus' conversation with the Apostles and the problem of the two swords, one representing spiritual power and the other secular power. The ability to understand individual positions in this discussion requires consideration of the broader context of medieval theological, anthropological, political and legal reflection. The sources of the latter are firmly rooted in the

Roman distinction between *potestas* and *auctoritas*. In this context, *potestas* is vested in secular power, while *auctoritas* in spiritual power.

An additional aspect, superimposed on the theme of the relationship between the spiritual and secular authorities, was the problem of the forms of political systems and their hierarchization on the basis of the degree to which they realized the common benefit (*to koine sympheron, utilitas communis*) and the common good (*to koinon agathon, bonum commune*). In this context, the role of spiritual power was often indicated as a factor guaranteeing the realization of the common good, ensuring that secular power did not degenerate and did not take the form of tyranny.

The late Middle Ages brings with it a discussion about the very structure of spiritual power. Should its most important factor be the Papacy or a council? A serious theological dispute with anthropological and political consequences – the dispute between intellectualism and voluntarism – is also flourishing at this time. All these issues set the stage for new ideas. On the one hand, they will be a source for projects that completely reject the concept of absolute good as not only irrelevant, but even harmful to the realization of political goals, among which the most important is the behavior of the state. Niccolo Machiavelli will be the most important thinker of this trend. On the other hand, they will lay the foundations for a great reform movement in the Church, which will be initiated in 1517 by the German Augustinian monk Martin Luther.

The goal of this volume of Horizons of Politics is to conduct such an analysis, covering the foundations of the complementary dichotomy of *potestas* and *auctoritas*, an example of a Christian approach to this issue, and finally the position on the issue of political power taken by the father of the Reformation.

Wit Pasierbek
Piotr Świercz
Theme issue editors